

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

## **Begging for Change**

### **Engaging with Johannesburg in Post-Apartheid South African Film**

Daniel David Herman / HRMDAN001

A minor dissertation submitted in ***partial fulfillment*** of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts in Media Theory and Practice**

Faculty of the Humanities

University of Cape Town

2012

#### **COMPULSORY DECLARATION**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	5
2. Literature Review .....	7
2.1 Historical Context .....	7
2.1.1 Audiences and Identity in South African Film .....	7
2.1.2 African Cinema and the City .....	10
2.2 City of Johannesburg .....	13
2.2.1 The rise of Johannesburg .....	13
2.2.2 The Township Space .....	14
2.2.3 Stories of Johannesburg .....	16
2.2.4 Johannesburg in Film .....	17
3. Enunciating the Urban Space .....	21
4. Film Summaries .....	28
4.1 <i>Jump the Gun</i> .....	28
4.2 <i>Hijack Stories</i> .....	29
4.3 <i>Tsotsi</i> .....	29
4.4 <i>District 9</i> .....	30
5. Analysis .....	32
5.1 Establishing the Change .....	32
5.2 Welcome to Johannesburg .....	34
5.3 Johannesburg as a Change Agent .....	46
5.4 The New Joburger .....	55
6. Conclusion .....	63
7. Bibliography .....	65

## Table of figures

Figure 1: Images of rioting in <i>District 9</i> .....	35
Figure 2: The headquarters of the MNU in <i>District 9</i> .....	36
Figure 3: Aerial snipers and armoured vehicles in <i>District 9</i> .....	37
Figure 4: Tsotsi rules in his comfort zone in Soweto .....	38
Figure 5: Tsotsi's elevated shack .....	39
Figure 6: The spectre of HIV/AIDS in <i>Tsotsi</i> .....	40
Figure 7: Tsotsi has a flashback to his youth as he traverses Johannesburg on foot .....	41
Figure 8: Sox travelling through Johannesburg in <i>Hijack Stories</i> .....	42
Figure 9: Grace saves Sox in <i>Hijack Stories</i> .....	44
Figure 10: Gugu emerges into the light in <i>Jump the Gun</i> .....	45
Figure 11: Clint witnesses a mugging in <i>Jump the Gun</i> .....	46
Figure 12: The desolation of the suburbs in <i>Tsotsi</i> .....	47
Figure 13: Desolation in the Johannesburg inner city in <i>Tsotsi</i> .....	49
Figure 14: Wickus scrounging for food in <i>District 9</i> .....	50
Figure 15: Wickus stealing a cellphone from a pedestrian in <i>District 9</i> .....	51
Figure 16: Sox with newfound township swagger in <i>Hijack Stories</i> .....	53
Figure 17: Engaging with the natural space of Johannesburg in <i>Jump the Gun</i> .....	54
Figure 18: Light shining on the park station stairwell in <i>Tsotsi</i> .....	56
Figure 19: Tsotsi takes in a beautiful view of Johannesburg .....	57
Figure 20: Wickus feasting on cat food in <i>District 9</i> .....	58
Figure 21: Sox botching a hijacking in <i>Hijack Stories</i> .....	60
Figure 22: Zama's final victory in <i>Hijack Stories</i> .....	61
Figure 23: Clint aiming to take on the city in <i>Jump the Gun</i> .....	62



## Acknowledgements

It is a rewarding feeling to complete this thesis after almost 3 years. Just as the characters in the films I have analysed have undergone an experience of change in Johannesburg, so have I transformed in the process of researching and writing about this topic. I have learnt about Johannesburg, about myself but most importantly, to value the sacrifices and support of others who have helped me along the way. Thank you to Dr. Ian-Malcolm Rijdsdijk for being an excellent mentor, whose engaging feedback, immense understanding and persistent optimism, enabled me to reach the end. Thank you to my siblings, Guy, Tanya and Marc, for believing in me and helping me push through in my darkest moments. Thanks to my Dad for his never wavering pride and for sacrificing so much for me. Finally but not least, a huge thank you to my Mom for making my success her personal agenda by supporting me every step of the way and pushing me over the finish line.

# 1. Introduction

The city of Johannesburg is globally identified with issues of inequality, prejudice and transformation. This identification is reinforced by the city's representation in film, in particular those of the post-apartheid era, which tend to emphasize the city's problems. The transformative power of living in Johannesburg, in particular how this experience impacts and shifts the personalities and experiences of the city's inhabitants, is often ignored. This thesis sets out to explore and analyse the consequences of engagement with Johannesburg by exploring the impact of the city on the protagonists in four post-apartheid Johannesburg films.

The films that will be analysed – *Jump the Gun* (1996), *Hijack Stories* (2000), *Tsotsi* (2005), and *District 9* (2009) – portray life in post-apartheid Johannesburg. These films were chosen because they have narratives that illustrate character transformation through exposure to the city of Johannesburg. The decision to focus on films that depict this era is deliberate, and I have done this in order to identify a new way of living in Johannesburg that is unique to this time period. In addition, the spread of years highlights how the experience of living in Johannesburg has changed over time.

The understanding created by this paper will reveal Johannesburg to be a change inducing environment on account of two distinct reasons: Firstly, the city drives change on account of its space and the dynamics at play within the different areas of the city. Secondly, the city drives change on account of the human interactions that take place within it. I will argue that the personal development created by this engagement with both location and people results in humility, understanding and tolerance for others. However, the analysis will also reveal that this change takes place under duress in the hostile Johannesburg environment. If not dealt with appropriately, the change process can go awry, leading to certain danger for the individual. Ultimately, the meaningful engagement of individuals with the city's unique physical spaces is what yields personal change. The analysis will highlight that if an individual steps out their familiar spaces, like their homes or neighbourhoods, and engages meaningfully with elements of the city that they have not yet experienced, it will result in profound personal change.

In order to understand the consequences of engagement with urban spaces in Johannesburg-set films, it is vital to explore key cinematic concerns relating to a number of topics: namely the history and legacy of the South African film industry, specific considerations of African cinema as well as the connections between cinema and the city. The first chapter will examine the issue of authentic representation of urban environments, and how this relates to the experience of living in Johannesburg.

Moving forward from this, a deep dive into the city of Johannesburg will enable us to unpack the potential for change within the urban space. As such, the second chapter is concerned with understanding Johannesburg from a historical, spatial and cultural perspective. In this, we will begin to see how the city itself has been represented in literature and in film, and also begin to understand the city's unique capacity to drive engagement and personal change.

Following from this, it is then essential to establish the theoretical framework upon which the research is based, focusing particularly on the work of Michel De Certeau and other key urban theorists. This framework will empower us to identify the ways in which individuals are impacted by their engagement with the city. Thus, De Certeau's theory provides a key theoretical platform for the analysis of films to follow.

Equipped with the historical and contextual understanding provided by previous chapters as well as with the theoretical framework, we will then be able to explore into the selected films, and understand more fully the consequences of engagement with Johannesburg. The analysis is divided into three sections. Following a synopsis of the key change that manifests in each of the analysed films, we look at the first impressions of Johannesburg as seen through the eyes of the films' protagonists, which enables us to establish the starting point of the change journey. Secondly, we explore the key moments of engagement within the films that drive personal change. Finally, we explore the final state of the characters by the end of their respective films in order to understand the consequences of engaging with Johannesburg.

This analysis should enable the reader to understand the consequences of engagement with Johannesburg, and should provide insight into the nature of change that emerges on account of a full engagement with the city.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Historical Context**

In this chapter, I will explore the history and context of South African film in general, with a specific interest in the way that the city has been represented in film throughout the history of South African cinema. I will intensify this exploration of urban representation in film exploring theories of African and urban cinema, with a particular emphasis on establishing what comprises an authentic representation of an urban space. Finally, I will explore theories relating to the depiction of the city in film, in order to contextualise this research within a broader framework of urban cinema.

#### **2.1.1 Audiences and Identity in South African Film**

The South African film industry dates back to 1896, beginning only 10 years after the City of Johannesburg was founded (Blignaut & Botha, 1992). Historically, South African film has had a confused identity. This confusion ensued for a number of reasons, most notably the fact that very few South African films reflected the aspirations of the country's diverse society, choosing to rather focus on international interests (Blignaut, 1992). Considering the range of South African identities at play, depicting a monolithic local identity has always been a challenge, particularly in times when the national discourse was dominated by a dogmatic apartheid agenda. It could be said that this lack of a discernible local identity has diminished South Africa's cinematic legacy. One of the key reasons for this is that historically the narratives of South African based films have been situated within the context of the country's political situation, most clearly around the issue of apartheid and race. Films like *Cry Freedom* (1987) and *Cry the Beloved Country* (1995) were international successes on the basis that they communicated the prevailing political issues of the day and were dissident.

As such, interest in local films was defined by the strict control held over these films by the apartheid government. A number of local films had a strong propagandistic element and looked to glorify the living situations of black South Africans. In the late

40s and early 50s, this genre of film highlighted that black South Africans were coming to terms with the white dominated dispensation and oppressive urban environment (Baines, 2001). The epitome of this tendency is *African Jim* (1949), a film about a young black man who moves to Johannesburg to seek a better life. *African Jim* was understood by audiences back then as suggesting a “true reflection of the African Native in the Modern City” (Baines, 2001, p. 185), by demonstrating that Johannesburg was a space filled with leisure, song and dance. According to Baines, this overtly positive depiction of the urban experience in South Africa was manifested across a number of films, and eventually emerged as a genre unto itself (Baines, 2001). *African Jim* was one of the first films that placed black South Africans into common daily situations and circumstances, in addition to celebrating talented black South Africans like Dolly Rathebe. In many ways, these cinematic representations of an ideal Johannesburg environment for black South Africans communicated a false South African identity to international audiences.

However, in the late 1980s, cinema set in Johannesburg started to play a prominent role in the struggle primarily due to the growing number of anti-apartheid films (Tomaselli, 1989). International audiences became exposed to films such as Oliver Schmitz’s *Mapantsula* (1988), the story of a streetwise hoodlum known as Panic, whose street-smart and streetwise savvy and confidence gets stripped away throughout the film, until he is confronted with the option of being an informer for the South African police (Beittel, 1990). While *Mapantsula* initially seems to be an indictment of gangster culture in Johannesburg, it eventually morphs into a critique of the apartheid regime.

*Mapantsula* was initially sold as a gangster film but received international acclaim on account of its anti-government standing (Beittel, 1990). After its initial release, the film was only available on video or seen at film festivals owing to the apartheid government’s fear that it had the power to incite uprising (Beittel, 1990). Furthermore, the regime was also concerned that such cinema would disturb a sense of ‘racial order’, particularly in light of how Panic openly defies his oppressors in the film (Rivers, 2007). As such, this reluctance of the apartheid regime to provide a rationale for the disconnect between what international audiences were seeing about South Africa, and what local audiences were viewing, thus reinforcing the lack of an authentic South African cinematic identity.

The international success of films like Jamie Uys's *The Gods Must be Crazy* (1980), captured the imagination of international audiences, albeit while portraying black South Africans as "incompetent politicians and idiotic terrorists" (Tomaselli, 2006, p. 173). This lack of nuance in the depiction of black South Africans in South Africa's most successful apartheid-era cinematic export indicates the lack of concern for indigenous aspirations in this period. Furthermore, films like *The Gods Must Be Crazy* were successful because they captured the fear of the unknown in a way that international audiences enjoyed. Films like Uys's packaged apartheid in a way that made it appear to be an innocuous joke, displacing political themes like separate development and replacing them with universal themes. The films of this period projected a view of South Africa that was either nostalgic or suggested the values of separate development, a key policy of the apartheid regime. Pre-1994 South African film did not enable audiences to derive a coherent representation of South African identity, as it was not authentic and did not represent the reality of the society.

Furthermore, this lack of authenticity was reinforced by the fact that a number of these films focused on encapsulating the experience of white liberals as critical players in the apartheid story (Tomaselli, 1992). These films moulded white liberals into the key heroes of the apartheid struggle, which reinforces the idea that while shifting towards a realistic representation of apartheid, South African films still catered for international audiences by emphasizing the role of questionably heroic white protagonists. Furthermore, the idea of the "white conscience film" (Rijsdijk, 2007) has been reinforced in numerous South African films in the post-apartheid era.

White South Africans have struggled to achieve a sense of identity in the complex South African cultural landscape but have been given substantial opportunities to express their regrets for past indiscretions through cinematic narratives. The primacy given to the White South African experience indicates that contemporary South African film has focused on highlighting the aspirations of only a small segment of South African society, and not the main body of the populace. Pre-1994 South African cinema did not enable audiences to derive a coherent representation of South African identity, as it did not represent the aspirations of the majority of society, and exacerbated the sense of South African cinematic identity as highly fractured.

### **2.1.2 African Cinema and the City**

In African cinema, maintaining the authenticity of indigenous interests depends greatly on the relationship between the individual protagonists of the films and the space that they inhabit. As such, the city often plays a key role in defining the structures in which protagonists operate (Armes, 2007). Protagonists in African films are controlled by the physical construction of the urban space, impeded by the laws and regulations, and influenced by their hometown communities. African films are distinct from Western films in that they enable the individual to be dominated by their surroundings, while Western films position protagonists as masters of their space (Armes, 2007). Therefore, for local films to represent authentic identities, they need to incorporate the urban space as a key influence in narrative progression.

This crisis of authenticity within post-apartheid South African cinema is interesting when compared to the struggle of African cinema, which for the most part is based around the idea of coming back to a state of authenticity, and a space free from colonial influences (Diawara, 2010). By showcasing narratives that confront the real issues of the African experience, Diawara suggests that the representation of Africa in these films is “fuller and more faithful to reality” (Diawara, 2010, p. 141). However, in order for this authentic representation of Africa on film to take shape, it requires that key issues are highlighted, notably the quest for authenticity and the confrontation between Africa and European colonialism, as well as social issues that take place on the ground (Diawara, 2010). The post-apartheid dispensation of South African film demands a focus on the real issues of everyday South Africans. This focus should exist independently of the will of external influences, whether it is political control or foreign interests.

The interests of international audiences still play a part in defining what African audiences are consuming. This stems from the influence of European and American film, which has created a set of cinematic expectations for the African film industry (Diawara, 2010). Diawara notes this particularly in more visual films that emphasise “beautiful images over serious content analysis” (Diawara, 2010, p. 141), as in his mind, this stands against the ideal of the African film. African film should challenge western conventions and explore the real aspirations of the African content, through meaningful content. Thus, African cinema should aim to avoid “trap of primitivism

and simple-mindedness” (Diawara, 2010, p. 165), and endeavour to cover narratives that correlate with the needs of indigenous audiences.

The fact that the urban space has such a key role to play in African film demands an understanding of the theory of city films as a genre. There are two types of city films: studio-shot and location-shot (Nowell-Smith, 2008). While studio-shot city films often struggle with authenticity as they are crafted and constructed as opposed to real, one of the benefits is that filmmakers are not limited by real constraints and are able to create fantastical experiences that would not normally occur in a city. Filmmakers can also control the conditions of production, which challenges the authenticity of the developed film. On the other hand, location-shot films are clearly identifiable and give films far more domestic appeal on account of their tangible realism (Nowell-Smith, 2008). Conversely, studio-shot urban films, particularly those filmed in Hollywood in the 1920s, enabled film makers to convey social contrasts and heightened narratives in a manner removed from the realism of films shot on location (Gold, 1997). Thus, as a result, initially studio-shot urban films began to convey a sense of urban consciousness as opposed to an actual place. This was eventually undermined in the 1940s as film-makers began to realise that they could convey atmosphere effectively by shooting on location (Gold, 1997). The preference for location over studio suggests that audiences are more likely to connect with films that depict authentic representations of urban environments.

In more recent times, cinematic representations of urban spaces have been influenced by Computer-generated Imagery as seen in science fiction films such as *Inception* (2010) and *Minority Report* (2002), which rely on CGI to create malleable spaces for filmmakers to explore fantastical or futuristic concepts. Furthermore, Martin Scorsese’s historical film *Gangs of New York* (2002) highlights one of the final times that a city was built in a studio backlot. Thus, it is apparent that creating authentic representations of urban spaces is dependent on the location in which films are shot, with the current trend being towards more location-shot films.

Films can also be understood as a form of travel experience. Film narratives that are based in a specific place have the power to transport audiences to that site, thus enabling a learning experience for audiences (Bruno, 1997, p. 46). By viewing films about a specific city, audiences are absorbing knowledge about the unique culture



and spatial practices apparent within the depicted urban space. This sense of absorption is heightened with films centred on metropolitan spaces, cities like New York and Johannesburg, which are filled with a sense of perpetual motion and change (Bruno, 1997). The reason for this heightened experience is that these cities are as “restless as films” (Bruno, 1997, p. 46). Bruno is suggesting that the dynamic nature of urban change mirrors the cinematic state of change, created by both imagery and editing. As a result of this constant change, metropolitan cities are “never too far from an exquisite state of ruin” (Bruno, 1997, p. 46), and as such exhibit the conflicts that keep audiences engaged and coming back for more. These metropolitan cities are futuristic both in terms of real life and how they are depicted in film, and lend themselves to compelling narratives. This is particularly relevant when assessing cinema based and shot in post-apartheid Johannesburg, as the city manifests a number of dystopian characteristics that lend themselves to rich and dense representations.

African film appears to have a unique relationship with the city, which revolves primarily around the importance of engaging with other people in urban environments by establishing a strong sense of community. Armes argues that the African film narrative views the lone individual as powerless and dependent on his community for support and success within the urban environment (Armes, 2007, p. 141). This suggests that one of key characteristics of the African cities in film is the depiction of the relationship between the protagonist and the various communal structures that appear within the urban environment. In these films, a rejected individual is “doomed, mostly to death” (Armes, 2007, p. 141), once again reinforcing the idea that belonging to a community is essential to surviving the African urban experience. Applied to the South African context, it could be argued that some form of “Ubuntu” is required in order to navigate the urban space, manifesting a willingness to be part of a broader community. In addition to this, cities in African film are strongly connected with the countryside, which contextualises the African city film within a range of issues, most notably the challenges of dealing with close knit communities.

In conclusion, the challenges of ensuring authenticity, specifically in relation to the representation of the urban space, have been a critical concern of South African cinema throughout its history given the political realities at play. While African

cinema grapples with similar challenges given the impact of colonialism, filmmakers appear to have moved forward by focusing on the representation of social issues. Further to this, urban cinematic theory provides solutions that enable South African films to move beyond the issues at play. Now that I have explored the various contextual concerns relating to this study, I will move into a discussion aimed at establishing Johannesburg's unique qualities as an urban space.

## **2.2 City of Johannesburg**

I will now to establish an understanding of the city of Johannesburg across a number of different levels. Firstly, I will examine the spatial dynamics at play in Johannesburg. Secondly, I will explore the portrayal of Johannesburg in literature, looking at genre concerns as well as narrative tropes. Finally, I will examine Johannesburg's representation in film and television, by identifying the manner in which various social concerns are represented in these mediums.

### **2.2.1 The rise of Johannesburg**

The city of Johannesburg is in a constant state of identity crisis. The discovery of gold formed the basis of Johannesburg's purpose for existing, which has left the city grappling with its own identity (Murray, 2008). Johannesburg's initial appearance as a mining town throws into question the city's very character: is Johannesburg simply a space where people look to establish wealth and success? Or is Johannesburg capable of developing a spiritual or emotional resonance with its inhabitants? Bremner argues that Johannesburg is a city where people discover new areas, and then exploit them until they are completely tapped out, which has resulted in the city becoming a sprawl of suburbs, shopping malls and commercial areas (Bremner, 2004). The sense of Johannesburg as a space that enables the exploitation of resources for financial gain is a clear indication of Johannesburg's inability to shed its 'mining town' identity, as the city is understood as a space of wealth accumulation at any cost.

This materialistic and selfish identity has resulted in a palpable tension between varying extremes in Johannesburg. On one side, Johannesburg's inherent wealth as well as cultural diversity has provided distinctly cosmopolitan flavour to the urban

space. On the other hand, its wealth is built on the back of the suffering of the poor, who live in degrading conditions in townships and dilapidated inner city buildings (Murray, 2008). The wealth gap in the city is undoubtedly one of the key issues at play in contemporary Johannesburg, as it identifies the city as a contradictory space that is constantly battling to discern its identity (Mbembe & Nuttall, 2008). This has resulted in high level of distrust and resentment amongst Johannesburg's inhabitants (Murray, 2008).

Furthermore, it is apparent that Johannesburg's spatial conditions have been planned according to the need of the apartheid government to segregate and divide communities along racial lines. As a result of the tension that exists in the city, contemporary Johannesburg can be seen as a place of "spatial dislocation, class differentiation and racial polarisation" (Mbembe & Nuttall, 2008, p. 12), which harks back to the legacy of apartheid. However, it is also evident that this historical view of the city alienates Johannesburg from being compared with other global cities with similar disparities, like Mumbai and Sao Paulo, on account of the fact that no other city shares Johannesburg's unique history (Mbembe & Nuttall, 2008).

### **2.2.2 The Township Space**

The township space is a clear example of the way in which Johannesburg has been spatially constructed. According to Ellapen (2007), the township space was set up by apartheid authorities as a pre-modern space on the threshold of contemporary Johannesburg life in order to not only separate whites from blacks physically but also psychologically. This implies a sense of the township space as an inferior space, a modern manifestation of primitivism, which was invented by the apartheid regime in order to marginalise the poorer classes. Furthermore, the township space also acts as a halfway point between urban and rural, and as such, acted as a form of decompression chamber, preparing new arrivals from rural areas for life in Johannesburg (Ellapen, 2007). This space was constructed by planners for the specific purposes of initiating new arrivals to the city into the migrant workforce.

Yet, this initial vision for the township has morphed from an isolating tool into far more powerful and resonant symbol within the city of Johannesburg. Over time, the township space has become renowned as a "site of social struggles" (Mbembe &

Nuttall, 2008, p. 12), existing at the heart of change within the city. The township space has played a unique role in the anti-apartheid movement. This role has been highlighted by the Soweto Uprising of 1976 and the fact that Soweto housed key anti-apartheid activists such as Steve Biko and Nelson Mandela. The township has exceeded its initial function, and had become a space that is historically, emotionally and politically significant for all South Africans.

Today, townships across the city play a key role in the formation of a uniquely Johannesburg identity. These townships include Soweto, Alexandra and Diepkloof, amongst others. This sense of a township identity has been reinforced in the post-apartheid era where township life has become remarkably similar to suburban life on account of a growing middle class experience in these areas (Mbembe & Nuttall, 2008).

The role of the township in Johannesburg lends itself to a discussion of the authenticity of the Johannesburg experience. Ellapen argues that the township space has been used to represent narratives of authentic black South Africans (Ellapen, 2007). But does this mean that other experiences of life in Johannesburg, i.e. suburban or corporate; are not authentic manifestations of the city?

This question can be answered by interrogating the relationship between the inhabitants of Johannesburg and the inner city, which is both part of and removed from the Johannesburg experience. While the inner city teems during the daytime with thousands of white-collar workers, it is mostly abandoned at night to squatters and low income residents, a fact that reinforces the divisions and fear that have come to represent the Johannesburg experience (Murray, 2008). Furthermore, the rise of “edge cities” (Bremner, 2004), new centres that have sprung up about the city such as Fourways and Sandton, has seen a gradual migration of activity from the inner city as well as the diminished appeal of the inner city amongst the inhabitants. Murray states that this migration to new centres has seen a deadening in pedestrian activity in the Central Business District (Murray, 2008). The decline of the city centre separates Johannesburg from other global metropolises, as the city is now defined by its newer centres and not by its historical core.

Yet, the inner city of Johannesburg is regenerating, with areas such as Braamfontein, Newtown and the Maboneng precinct (which houses a number of

boutique stores, art galleries, hotels as well as a boutique cinema known as the Bioscope) leading the revitalisation and regeneration, and perhaps the gentrification, of Johannesburg's inner city. Furthermore, large corporations have created self-sufficient environments within the CBD in order keep staff members protected from the dangers of the outside, as well as contributing to urban renewal (Bremner, 2004). These programs aim to remove the divide that exists between the city centre and the cities inhabitants, but there is still substantial work to be done.

### **2.2.3 Stories of Johannesburg**

Johannesburg is not only a city of major spatial concerns but also "a site of fantasy, desire and imagination" (Mbembe & Nuttall, 2008, p. 12). An understanding of Johannesburg as a centre for imaginative creative production is manifested in the themes and depictions of the city across a variety of mediums including film, literature and poetry. It is clear that many of the attitudes depicted in media about Johannesburg stem directly from the history of the city and its spatial dynamics. Kruger argues that the standard Johannesburg narrative follows the trope of "the newly arrived naïf who struggles to master the metropolis" (Kruger, 2005, p. 78), which was classically depicted in the film, *African Jim*. These stories of migration and arrival to Johannesburg have resulted in a heightened melodrama, which exacerbates the sense of manifold social issues at play on the ground (Kruger, 2005).

Furthermore, narratives of arrival in Johannesburg are prevalent in contemporary writings of the city. Phaswane Mpe's novel, *Welcome to our Hillbrow*, (2001), depicts life in Hillbrow, a formerly middle class suburb that was transformed by vast social problems, such as poverty, HIV and xenophobia following the end of apartheid. The novel shares Mpe's experience of engaging with people who have 'arrived' in Hillbrow, and moulded it in the image of the new, post-apartheid city. In this case, the arrival of immigrants has ushered in a new way of understanding the city, heralding a new group of people as they attempt to "[insinuate] themselves into the urban fabric" (Kruger, 2005, p. 84). Therefore, while the narrative of arriving in the city is a conventional trope of Johannesburg creative production, this same narrative is constantly being redefined over time.

The genre of science fiction is another key manifestation of the Johannesburg experience across creative production. Murray argues that there is a similarity between the Johannesburg cityscape and the cityscape depicted in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, as in many ways both cityscapes depict a sense of utopian fantasy mixed with a form of dystopian nightmare (Murray, 2008). As such, Johannesburg is a space whose "strange and violent history" (Penfold, 2011, p. 1) makes it ripe for reinterpretation into the science fiction genre. The prevalence of this genre is manifested in contemporary creative works set in Johannesburg, famously through Neill Blomkamp's *District 9* (2009), but also in literature, in Lauren Beukes' *Zoo City* (2010). In *District 9*, the main protagonist Wickus, a corporate drone, fuses with alien DNA and becomes a part of subaltern class of aliens who live in a slum on the outskirts of Johannesburg. In *Zoo City*, Beukes depicts a Johannesburg where convicted felons are forced to live with an animal attached to them in a near symbiotic relationship. The criminals live in 'Zoo City', a slum teeming with criminals and their imposed pets. Both *Zoo City* and *District 9* highlight symbiosis as a key facet of life in Johannesburg, which implies that living in contemporary Johannesburg requires you to fuse with new identities and experiences against your will.

Furthermore, contemporary Johannesburg writing also demonstrates a willingness to map out the "pedestrian enunciations that are revising the structure and experience of the city's public sphere" (Kruger, 2005, p. 8). This refers to the fact that the concept of walking through the Johannesburg city space, and reconfiguring new spatial dimensions, is starting to play a more prominent role in contemporary writing about Johannesburg. Notably, Andie Miller's book *Slow Motion* (2010) reflects on walking in the city of Johannesburg by exploring different attitudes to this activity. In her mind, the process of walking the city is adventurous and can lead to genuine discovery, where "we can watch the Ivy change colour" (Miller, 2010, p. 154). It is also possible to live an entire life in Johannesburg without meaningful pedestrian engagement, given the proclivity of wealthier inhabitants to drive through the city. Through Miller's work, we can see that exploring the city on foot provides a new platform for engagement.

#### **2.2.4 Johannesburg in Film**

Johannesburg's spatial and cultural dynamics have an impact on how the city is portrayed on screen. Johannesburg has been characterised in film as a space where there is a tangible fear of foreigners, as there is a perception that outsiders are mostly responsible for a number of prevailing social ills (Kruger, 2009, p. 237). This is manifested in a number of Johannesburg based films, including *Jerusalema* (2008) and *District 9*, where foreigners, notably Nigerians, are depicted as malevolent forces within the Johannesburg arena. Foreigners are seen as the "ultimate strangers" (Murray, 2003, p. 460), and their representation is a key aspect of Johannesburg in film. This distrust of outsiders has been exposed by the xenophobic violence that took place in 2008 in Johannesburg.

Another key aspect of Johannesburg's representation in film is the fact that the city is South Africa's most potent commercial centre. As the very basis for Johannesburg's existence is the pursuit of material wealth, it is clear that this drive for money and financial security is an integral part of the cities' representation in cinema. Certain visual representations of Johannesburg celebrate the "conspicuous consumption of the new elite" (Kruger, 2010, p. 75), which positions the city as a materialistic space. This materialism manifests in a form of "visual opulence" (Kruger, 2010, p. 92) that positions career-driven achievement and the accumulation of wealth as a critical urban focus. This materialism appears in films such as *Gums & Noses* (2003), which explores the opulence and excess of the advertising industry in Johannesburg, as well as *Jerusalema* (2008), where the main protagonist develops real wealth based on his mastery of the Johannesburg landscape and the people within it.

This representation of Johannesburg as a central hub for the pursuit of wealth is at odds with a need to promote issues of genuine social importance. There is yet another representation of Johannesburg that explores the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on the urban environment. Hodes argues that the Gavin Hood's *Tsotsi* portrays Johannesburg as a key site of the AIDS infection, thereby positioning the city as an urban manifestation of one of the planet's gravest social ills (Hodes, 2008). In this representation, the HIV/AIDS epidemic is all consuming within the environment, and as such, becomes a public responsibility. This representation of Johannesburg as a location of disease and social issues, while painting a picture of the city as a total dystopia, deals with social issues that are important and at the forefront of resident's concerns. Hood has also included an addition to Athol

Fugard's story in the wealthy black family which speaks to the black middle class, and as such, provides a glimpse of the 'other' Johannesburg; the narrative of the upwardly mobile suburban elite. This view of the socio-economic divide is essential for showcasing an authentic visualisation of the Johannesburg experience to both local and international audiences.

Crime is another major focal point of life in Johannesburg. The city has been represented as a dangerous city where "greed, money and lawlessness" (Fu & Murray, 2007, p. 279) figure prominently in depictions in the city in films. With narratives of crime and violence, such as those that appear in *Tsotsi*, *Jerusalema* and *Hijack Stories*, all of which follow the experiences of criminals in the city, a perception is created of Johannesburg as a city consumed by violence and disorder. The representation of crime in Johannesburg in cinema acts as a counterbalance to sunshine clichés of the so-called rainbow nation, and infects the image of the city with a sense of dystopian realism (Fu & Murray, 2007, p. 285). As such, the real social problems impacting on the urban environment counterbalance the Johannesburg ideal, thus creating a more authentic representation of Johannesburg in film.

It is also critical to look at the way that different urban spaces of Johannesburg are represented in film. Cinematic representation of Johannesburg has become strongly associated with "movement between different spatial localities" (Fu & Murray, 2007, p. 285). Each different space within Johannesburg has a unique character and identity. Some of these spaces, like the township, have become synonymous with the clichés of Johannesburg's history as filmmakers have yet to remove the spectre of colonial history from their representations of Johannesburg (Ellapen, 2007, p. 135). On the other hand, filmmakers are developing more authentic representations of actual Johannesburg spaces by referencing landmarks, such as the Ponte Tower, the Nelson Mandela Bridge, Park Station and others, and linking these spaces to contemporary politics and issues (Fu & Murray, 2007). While the representation of Johannesburg space is contentious as it is tied into the city's origin and history, engagement with these spaces in film may provide answers in terms of redefining a new Johannesburg identity going forward.



As such, Johannesburg is a critical urban space with a challenging history and a wealth of opportunities for representation. The city can be a space for growth, for change and development. The following chapter will explore how Johannesburg can be imagined as a change agent by examining the theories of Michel de Certeau and its implications for an analysis of post-apartheid Johannesburg film.

University of Cape Town

### 3. Enunciating the Urban Space

The question of whether engagement with an urban space can drive individual change depends on the city itself developing qualities that enable it to impact the individual. In “Walking the City”, Michel De Certeau explores the possibility of assigning a transformative quality to urban spaces, and its potential application to cultural production. I’d like to examine De Certeau’s essay with a view to positioning his theory as the framework upon which the analysis of films is based.

In his opening paragraph, De Certeau compares the city to the sea, seeing it as an uncontrollable force of nature. In this tumultuous space, a number of conflicting energies or extremes are merged into one unwieldy platform, thus creating a layered and textured environment (De Certeau, 1988). This suggests that the city is a space that is constantly reinventing and redefining itself in a manner that suggests the chaos of nature, even if it man-made. Not only is De Certeau assigning natural qualities to man-made environments, he suggests that a city is constantly “exploding” and being recreated, not dissimilar to the creation of the universe through the big bang, which reinforces the view of cities as spaces of natural chaos.

It is clear that the city is a revelatory environment where new experiences and discoveries are made that enable one to have a more complete understanding of the urban space and the people within it (De Certeau, 1988). De Certeau considers how this epiphany of identity happens from two different perspectives. Firstly, he explores the implications of viewing the city from above, and how this shifts how individuals experience the city. Secondly, he contrasts this observer role with the experience of walkers on the ground, which is in his mind at the core of reconfiguring urban spatial dynamics.

In terms of the first perspective of viewing the city from above, De Certeau speaks of the fact that observations from a high vantage point distance the viewer from the experience on the ground. The viewer from above is liberated from the experiences and rituals taking place below, yet when the viewer returns it is often difficult to adapt to the new ways of living. This urban voyeurism implies two things: firstly, that it is only truly possible to experience the city on the ground level where things are

happening, insinuating a voyeuristic approach serves more to alienate observer from the city. Secondly, that observing the city from above jars one's perception of the city and makes it extremely difficult to have a meaningful connection with the city below. However, it is also clear that by viewing the city from above, the observer is equipped with an understanding of how he can manipulate the city space to achieve his goals and ends. Therefore, the aerial view of the city provides the observer with a superior knowledge of the city to the man on the ground, and thus empowers him beyond the man on the ground.

In De Certeau's mind, the walker is the creator, who "writes the urban text without being able to read it" (Nuttall, 2004, p. 741). This suggests that the diverse and multiple manners in which the walker makes use of the city space create a plethora of narrative opportunities. The fact that walkers do not understand how their individual paths affect the city as a whole enables the city to more effectively construct both the individual narratives of pedestrian and its larger metanarrative.

The variety of paths and stories enables the urban environment to grow beyond its constructed boundaries, imbuing the city with a richness of narrative that planners cannot hope to create by design alone. It is also apparent that planners cannot hope to contain the richness of the city, as evidenced in South Africa by the failure of the apartheid regime to control individual narratives in the city, even with their policies that sought to control the urban space. With this in mind, the manner in which the walker makes use of the space around him creates an incredible textured representation of the city. The walker moves in new trajectories every single day, creating an experience that is different from anything that has gone before. Thus, it is not surprising that De Certeau asserts that the city of movement merges with the city of plans to create new stories and narratives, thus reinforcing the dynamic relationship that exists between the walkers and the city around them. This is particularly relevant to the study of city and cinema wherein the relationship between protagonists and the environments that surround them is a key characteristic of this genre.

Furthermore, De Certeau speaks about the mass of footprints in the city, the immensity of the urban population, and how their narratives are intertwined, yet completely different. De Certeau argues that their "intertwined paths give shape to

spaces” (De Certeau, 1988, p. 97), which suggest that cities are created by the confluence of diverse stories of its inhabitants, and not by the singular experience. Therefore, it is clear that when looking at films relating to one particular urban space, it is critical to look at a variety of different character paths in order to assess how the city is represented. De Certeau is suggesting that it is only within the trajectory of the masses that we are able to locate the true urban trajectory.

De Certeau aims to provide us with a framework with which to review and understand urban trajectories. In his opinion, walking the city is akin to speaking a language in that it creates new ways of understanding and mastering the urban space. By engaging with different spaces, in the same way as one engages with different words, it creates a relationship between the walker and the city. Like a language speaker, the walker becomes naturally attuned to the dynamics of the urban environment, familiar and at ease. The walker develops a mastery of space that enables him to control and construct the narratives as they please him. De Certeau asserts that the walker has the ability to mould space into whatever he pleases, as his control of paths enables him to “transform spatial signifiers” (De Certeau, 1988, p. 98) into whatever he chooses. The walker is unaware of his power, of his ability to shape and mould the world around him. A simple act like bumping into a stranger or picking up a coin of the ground can create a ripple effect that transforms a narrative into something entirely different than intended.

Yet, it is also apparent that those walkers who are able to control and manipulate their trajectories are more effective at surviving and succeeding in urban environments. They choose their paths but manifest them in a considered, personal and secret way, which enables them to become masters of the space that they inhabit (De Certeau, 1988). However, it is also important to note that regardless of the walker’s discretion in constructing his journey, the experience is highly impacted by the number of obstacles and interruption in the walker’s path (De Certeau, 1988). These obstacles present themselves through greetings and meeting of people, events and a wealth of diverse interaction. In Johannesburg, there are numerous interruptions that challenge the walker. These interruptions range from car guards to street beggars, from acts of crime and brutality to acts of kindness and charity. There are also emotional factors that confront the walker in Johannesburg, as the socio-economic divide forces the walker to experience either extreme wealth or extreme

poverty. As a result, it becomes clear that the urban space is organic and cannot be controlled by anyone. As such, the urban narrative is unlimited in its diversity, a multiplicity created by a combination of planners, walkers and unplanned interruptions.

In contrast to this, De Certeau asserts that each walker has a specific style, which suggests that the walker has an individualised manner of navigating through the city (De Certeau, 1988). Ultimately, it is the walker who determines how he moves through the city space and the impact that such movement has on the walker's identity. Yet, it is evident that in any urban metropolis, there are people who are masters of space and place who exist in addition to people who stumble across these spaces quite blindly, encountering unexpected experiences. As such, this idea of stylish and graceful movement through an urban space is not necessarily the most impactful means of creating identity.

Encounters with spaces that are beyond the awareness and control of the walker may have greater transformative power than spaces with which the walker is familiar. According to Nuttall, fluidity of movement through the city in tandem with its uncertain nature challenges this notion of the city as an ordered pattern of movement that is possible to master and control (Nuttall, 2004). Given this understanding of the urban space as a place of chaos, it is apparent that transformative experiences are as such dependent on the walker being exposed to spaces and experiences beyond his understanding.

De Certeau believes that there are clear similarities between the act of walking around a city and that of writing about the city. He suggests that the various "turns and detours" that people take in their daily experiences are akin to turns of phrase (De Certeau, 1988). A turn of phrase connotes the creation of something poetic from a rich vocabulary of words and ideas, and a city has similar qualities in that it enables the walker to construct a path from a multitude of different streets and experiences. The path created has an almost poetic quality to it, and De Certeau suggests that the "poem of walking manipulates spatial organisation" (De Certeau, 1988, p. 101) in its ability to create ambiguities, references and have an element of surprise. Furthermore, Morris reinforces this idea by suggesting that the turns and detours of the walker have the ability to "turn place into space" (Morris, 2004, p.

678). Thus, the walker's movement has the power to unleash the metaphorical significance inherent within an urban environment, but often ignored. As such, these theorists are suggesting that the composition of paths through an urban space can have a powerful metaphorical impact on an individual's ability to craft his own identity, and as such lends itself to understanding cultural production centred around cities as a form of urban poetry, a form of creation that carries a resonance beyond the spatial and historical issues at play.

This deeper resonance is ultimately created by the experience of the primary protagonist as he navigates through the urban space. De Certeau asserts that the inherent power of humans is to transform the scene around them even if people cannot be contained or fixed (De Certeau, 1988). As such, the walker provides the transformative element which effectively emancipates urban spaces from the control and rigour of their original planning, as well as their historical context. This is especially relevant to the South African context. According to Nuttall, contemporary South African society can be understood as a space wherein "social relations or attitudes remain substantially unchanged" (Nuttall, 2004, p. 731), on account of the inflexible nature of its citizens. This notion of the urban environment being stagnant and unchanging is further undermined by De Certeau's notion that the mass of people in the urban space have the power to distort, fragment and divert common understanding of urban environment (De Certeau, 1988). It could be argued that the South African urban environment constantly changes depending on the walkers within it. Thus, new entrants to the urban environment in the post-apartheid times have created a situation wherein urban environments and the prevailing attitudes within them are constantly changing and growing dependent on the people or walkers who inhabit and interact with the city. Applied to the post-apartheid South African context, it is clear that this is a clear indication that the city is in a state of constant flux, as there are constantly new paths being walked in the city on a daily basis.

This state of flux is only heightened by the sheer diversity of the walkers that appear within the inner city as well as surrounding areas. The walkers of the city space are inherently pilgrims as they are focused only on their destinations; it is evident that there is also room for walkers who lack direction and focus (Nuttall, 2004). De Certeau argues that the act of walking itself is in fact the act of lacking a place, as

one is constantly moving in search of their final destination (De Certeau, 1988). In his understanding, the walker's final 'destination' is not a place; rather his destination is an arrival at a new symbolic identity that has been defined on account of his movement through the city.

De Certeau suggests that the identity bestowed by the city is even more symbolic because it is temporary, given the nature of the walker's brief engagements with urban environments (De Certeau, 1988). This statement seems to deprive the identities created by the urban environment of their legitimacy, as it suggests that they exist for fleeting moments. Yet, it is also apparent that the city is a place of "manifold rhythms, forged through daily encounters and multiple experiences of time and space" (Nuttall, 2004, p. 742), and as such, the identities created for the walkers lend themselves towards building an identity for the entire city. Thus, the mass of walkers and their varied stories support the creation of an urban metanarrative that allows audiences to consume and understand representations of cities.

It is necessary to highlight that this idea of 'walking the city' does not only speak to the act of walking, but rather speaks to a variety of different forms of movement through the urban environment. Morris argues that De Certeau's emphasis on walkers does not erase forms of mobility like driving or the use of public transport, rather it reconfigures them in interesting ways so that they can have the same meaning as walking (Morris, 2004). This is especially pertinent to Johannesburg, which is not considered to be a pedestrian friendly environment, and as such, it is essential that the use of this theory can apply to the form of mobility most prominently used by the residents of Johannesburg. Graham (2007) suggests that it is unfair to ignore automobiles from the analysis as they play an integral role in everyday life in this particular environment and construct the social experience within the city. As such, it is evident that De Certeau's theory can be applied to the variety of different movements that manifest within urban environments.

In conclusion, the city itself is defined by three conflicting methods of construction. Firstly, it is constructed by planners, who meticulously design urban environments in order to control and understand them. Secondly, it is defined by its history and context, the gist of what has gone on in its past. Finally, the city is constructed by its inhabitants, the people who tread its paths, and create new narratives every time

they step outside into the urban space. It is the inhabitants who construct both the identity that the city gives them, as well as the identity of the city itself, through their interactions with the planned and contextualised city as well as their interactions with one another. At the same time, the city is shifting their identities into a different space. These manifold interactions result in the creation of an urban metanarrative that better enables audiences to understand the various types of cities that exist. Furthermore, the construction of urban identity is not only limited to pedestrians but also to motorists as their mobility still plays an integral role in constructing the urban metanarrative.

De Certeau's text provides a platform for understanding and unpacking the impact that the urban space can have on the individual. While the city can define identity, the individual also has the power to shift and change the urban space by interacting with it. Therefore, *Walking in the City* allows for an analysis of urban cinema that identifies the impact of the city on the individual. Using this theory as starting base, I will now analyse four contemporary films in order to establish the extent to which engagement with the urban space drives personal change.



## 4. Film Summaries

### 4.1 *Jump the Gun*

Set in post-apartheid Johannesburg, *Jump the Gun* follows the experiences of two newcomers to the Johannesburg environment, and how their lives intersect based on their experiences and the people they meet in the city. The first newcomer is Clinton (Lionel Newton), a nomadic electrician previously based in Secunda, who has come to Johannesburg as a respite in between jobs. The second newcomer is Gugu (Baby Cele), an aspirant singer from Durban, who has come to Johannesburg, seeking fame and wealth.

Clinton arrives in the city and is shocked at the manner in which Johannesburg has changed. He witnesses crime and poverty and becomes paranoid, looking to purchase a gun on the basis of self-defence. On the other hand, Gugu throws herself headfirst into the Johannesburg rat race, with one of her first acts in Johannesburg being to sleep with Thabo (Rapulana Seiphumo), the manager of a band for which she wishes to audition.

Clinton meets and begins a relationship with Minnie (Michele Burgers), an alcoholic prostitute who has lost everything, while Gugu is wooed by Bazooka (Thulani Nyembe), a wealthy and crippled gangster. Clinton falls in love with Minnie, without realising she is a prostitute, but when it emerges that this is the case, he leaves her for a while. When it emerges that Gugu is filtering money from Bazooka into Thabo's band, Bazooka threatens to kill Gugu if she ever leaves him. Gugu runs away from Bazooka's home to Johannesburg where she finds refuge with Clint and Minnie, who provide her a form of protection.

Towards the end of the film, Clinton is sharing a bed with Gugu and Minnie, and has a conversation with Gugu. In this conversation, it emerges that Clinton has never had a meaningful conversation with a black South African. The film ends with Clinton leaving to his next job, and Gugu and Minnie continuing their friendship.

## **4.2 *Hijack Stories***

*Hijack Stories* is a film about an actor, Sox Morake (Tony Kgoroge), who is desperate to get a role as a notorious hijacker in a popular television show called “Bra Biza”. However, Sox fails in his auditions as he is unable to channel a township mentality, as he has lived the majority of his life in the upmarket Johannesburg suburb of Rosebank. In addition, he has a white girlfriend and finds himself totally disconnected from the township experience.

Thus, in order to reconnect with his township roots, Sox goes to Soweto and falls in with a gang of hijackers, led by the notorious Zama (Rapulana Seiphumo). Sox begins a relationship with Grace (Motshidi Motshegwa), a sassy township girl. While initially suspicious of Sox’s motives, Zama agrees to take him on and give him an education in what it means to be a hijacker.

As Sox gets deeper in with gangsters and Grace, Sox begins to lose himself and becomes intoxicated with the lifestyle. Further to this, he auditions for the role of ‘Bra Biza’ twice, each time with more and more success. He goes with Zama on a heist, and while he is unable to do the job properly himself, he shares in the rewards of the heist. However, Sox is so corrupted with power that he declares himself to be the leader of the gang, causing a rift with Zama. As punishment, Zama forces Sox to take part in an extremely dangerous heist, which results in Zama’s gang falling apart and Sox getting shot. Sox pleads with Zama to send him to a ‘white’ hospital for proper medical treatment. At the end of the film, Zama auditions for the role of ‘Bra Biza’ and gets the part.

## **4.3 *Tsotsi***

Gavin Hood’s *Tsotsi*, based on the Athol Fugard novel of the same name, is the story of a gangster who, in a botched hijacking, accidentally kidnaps a small child. The film is set in Johannesburg in post-apartheid South Africa. The film follows the journey of Tsotsi (Presley Chweneyegae) throughout the film, which ultimately culminates in his returning the child to his rightful parents.

The film opens with Tsotsi and his gang, Aap (Kenneth Nkosi), Butcher (Zenzo Ncqobe) and Boston (Mothusi Magano), preparing to enter the city for looking for an opportunity to make cash by mugging a bystander. They go to Park Station in Johannesburg, and attempt to mug an old man. The man resists, leading to Butcher stabbing and killing him. This precipitates a fall out between the gang members, in which Tsotsi snaps and beats Boston badly. Devastated, Tsotsi leaves the township and goes to the suburbs, where he hijacks a woman, stealing her car and shooting her in the belly. After making his getaway, he realises that her baby is still in the vehicle. Upon discovering the child, he crashes the car, damages it, and then resolves to take the child with him.

His initial attempts to look after the child are not successful, so he turns to Miriam (Terry Pheto), a young mother, to feed and look after the child. After a number of defining incidents, Tsotsi resolves to return the child back to his parents. When he does so, he is confronted by the police. The final standoff is emotional, but ultimately Tsotsi returns the child to its parents and turns himself in.

#### **4.4 *District 9***

Neill Blomkamp's *District 9* is a science fiction film set in Johannesburg. In this alternate Johannesburg, alien refugees have landed in South Africa, and have been settled in a refugee camp in the city called District 9, that looks remarkably similar to contemporary informal settlements, such as Diepsloot and Alexandra. The aliens, referred to derogatively as 'prawns', are considered threatening by broader South African society, and their presence is managed by MultiNational United (MNU), a corporate security company that also looks at ways to profit from their continued presence by harnessing their technology, most notably their advanced weaponry.

The narrative of *District 9* focuses on Wickus van Der Merwe (Sharlto Copley), a MNU employee, who has been handpicked by the MNU to oversee the relocation of the alien refugees to a new settlement on the outskirts of the city. While overseeing the relocation, Wickus is infected with alien fluid. The impact of this infection is that Wickus begins to turn into a 'prawn' himself. When he is discovered, he is captured

by MNU, who then begin to perform cruel experiments on him. Wickus escapes, and now a total outcast from society, seeks refuge in District 9, where he allies himself with an alien called Christopher Johnson (Jason Cope), who requires the mysterious fluid in order to fuel the alien spaceship to return home. Wickus agrees to help him if Christopher promises to transform Wickus back to normal. Together, Wickus and Christopher infiltrate the MNU lab and retrieve the fluid.

On returning to District 9, Wickus discovers that Christopher cannot transform him back to normal instantaneously. Wickus betrays Christopher and attempts to make his escape, but he is prevented by the MNU. Eventually, as the MNU are about to kill Christopher, Wickus rescues him and enables Christopher to get into the spaceship and return to his home planet. While Christopher escapes, Wickus is about to be killed by Kobus (David James), but he is rescued by other aliens. The film ends with an alien, which the audience assumes is Wickus following his complete transformation, making a flower from scrap metal.

## 5. Analysis

### 5.1 Establishing the Change

In order to analyse the nature of change in Johannesburg, it is vital to establish and understand the nature of the change in each of the four analysed films.

In *Jump the Gun*, the critical personal change in this film comes through the character of Clinton. Upon his initial arrival to Johannesburg, he is still entrenched in a racial and antiquated way of thinking, and has not changed with the environment around him. This is illustrated by his language: he calls Black South Africans “floppies”, and has negative preconceptions about life in the new South Africa. When he meets Thabo for the first time, he is not even willing to greet him properly. However, by engaging with elements of Johannesburg life and having meaningful encounters with the people around him, he is able to change his thinking and become more accepting and tolerant of others. When he risks his life to defend Gugu, he is showing that he has become sensitive to the needs of his fellow citizen, and further to this, when he has a conversation with her in his bedroom, he shows that he has overcome his previous misconceptions of black people. At the end of the film, Clint leaves Johannesburg for another job; however he has been highly impacted by his brief experience in the city, which enables him to move forward into the new South Africa with confidence. The final scene of him shooting out of his window is representative of this change.

The key transformation in *District 9* is Wickus’ physical change from human to alien following his infection by the alien fluid. Yet, it is apparent that there is an additional emotional transformation that occurs in tandem with this physical one. By experiencing the plight of the alien, in particular, when he is experimented on, Wickus develops empathy for aliens that he did not have when he was managing their removal from the Township. Further, through his engagement with Christopher Johnson and his son, Wickus establishes a bond of brotherhood with the aliens that ultimately results in him defending Christopher from the MNU and enabling him to escape from the clutches of the MNU. Finally, when Wickus’ transformation is in its

final stages, he is defended by a gang of aliens who eliminate Kobus. Ultimately, Wickus is forced to accept his fate as an alien, and is seen in his completely transformed state at the end of the film. While Wickus's change occurs against his will, it is clear that in becoming an alien, Wickus develops sensitivity for their plight that he would not have had otherwise. There is a message in this for South Africans, which suggests that first-hand experience is integral to understanding the plight of the other in our midst, while becoming an outcast from main stream society.

In Gavin Hood's *Tsotsi*, the key change manifests in the character of Tsotsi. Tsotsi begins the film as a criminal and gang leader, a man of few words. When his behaviour is questioned by Boston, he reacts violently, beating Boston badly. He then runs away to the suburbs, close to tears, and seeks release by committing an act of crime, by hijacking the vehicle and shooting the child's mother. Later in the film, Tsotsi returns to Park Station and has a confrontation with a blind, crippled beggar on the street, cruelly kicking over his money and threatening to kill him. However, his questioning of the beggar results in Tsotsi confronting his own insecurities, and he lets the man go. In between these various visits to the city, Tsotsi's life in the township is changing because of the child. His former gang members begin to abandon him. On another visit to the suburb, in particular the house from which he kidnapped the child; he is forced to kill Butcher to prevent him from murdering the child's father. Tsotsi develops genuine feelings for the child, and finds the decision to return him to his parents exceedingly difficult. But by the end of the film, he is able to take criticism far more effectively as the idea to return the child comes from Miriam, which demonstrates the extent of his transformation. The final sequences of the film in which he endeavours to return the child to its parents are indicators of Tsotsi's personal growth throughout the film.

Throughout *Hijack Stories*, Sox's journey is profound. The obvious change is that of Sox, who after entering and engaging with the township space, develops a new attitude that changes his experience of life in Johannesburg. He becomes dissatisfied with the middle class, suburban lifestyle in Rosebank, and develops a real swagger and passion for life in the township space. However, this change comes at a high price, as he is forced to compromise his morals in order to succeed in this environment. Sox demonstrates tremendous hubris in his engagement with the hijacker mentality, and becomes intoxicated with power, which drives him into

conflict with Zama. However, Sox's change is seen to be superficial as when he is badly wounded, he craves the safety and reliability of private medical care as opposed to the poor conditions at the public hospital. Furthermore, his reason for change is undermined by the fact that Zama steals his identity and successfully auditions for the role of 'Bra Biza'. The harshness of Sox's suffering at the end of the film suggests that journeys through Johannesburg are fraught with danger, and one needs to be wary that change in Johannesburg comes at high price.

The changes depicted in each film are highly varied and nuanced. There is no single way to exist in the unwieldy space of post-apartheid Johannesburg. I will now analyse the various change experiences by tracking them as a narrative journey as seen in each film.

## **5.2 Welcome to Johannesburg**

In this section, I will explore the initial representation of the Johannesburg environment within the films as well as the first engagement of the protagonist with the urban space. From this chapter, the common themes in the film maker's depiction of the urban space should emerge.

Johannesburg is a city of contrasts and has been represented from a number of different perspectives in the various cultural representations of the city. This diversity of representation remains constant in the films analysed. In *District 9*, the initial representation of Johannesburg is that it is a violent and dangerous environment. This is manifested through the documentary style opening of the film in which Blomkamp establishes the danger of Johannesburg by representing riots, violence and dissatisfaction. In fact, one of the earliest shots of the aliens outdoors is a televised riot taking place at a petrol station.

Figure 1: Images of rioting in *District 9*



The depiction of rioting situates Johannesburg as a hostile environment, but it also connects the narrative of *District 9* to the realities on the ground in a profound manner. The xenophobic attacks and service delivery riots, which were prevalent in Johannesburg in the late 2010s, are represented in Blomkamp's alternate Johannesburg, establishing a very real perception of Johannesburg's dangerous side. It is also apparent that Blomkamp ignores the more tranquil and everyday aspects of the city in order to establish the city as hostile, which supports the sci-fi action narrative of *District 9*.

The visuals of rioting and destitution take place in an outdoor environment and involve mostly black South Africans and aliens, while the initial depictions of white people in the city are seen either from above or indoors. Multi-national United (MNU) is based in the Carlton Centre, the tallest building in Johannesburg, which suggests that this corporation is totally disengaged from the pulse of what is occurring on the ground in Johannesburg. This links back to De Certeau's assertion that viewing the city from above is a process that distances an individual from the experiences on the ground. In support of this idea of the MNU are viewing the city from a distance, Blomkamp's initial establishing shots of Johannesburg are aerial shots, which reinforces this sense of alienation. The inference could be that in order to connect with the experience of the ground, one has to move beyond the lens of the documentary film camera, to leave the safety of higher ground, and get down to ground level. Wickus, the main protagonist, is eventually forced to abandon higher ground and get involved with real Johannesburg on the ground.



Figure 2: The headquarters of the MNU in *District 9*



The sense that higher ground is a safe way of negotiating the dangerous Johannesburg landscape in *District 9* is further reinforced by the immense precautions that MNU force undertakes when leaving their headquarters and preparing to relocate the aliens. When the MNU leave the safety of their tall building, it is in armoured vehicles and with full body armour. This suggests that the MNU, while not only being totally disconnected from the experience on the ground in the city, look to limit their real engagement with the experience on the ground in Johannesburg.

Further to this, when the MNU deploys their troops, there are two shots of a sniper in a helicopter overlooking the city. In the first shot, when the helicopter is tracking the movement of the armoured vehicles the sniper is more relaxed. In the second shot, when they are overlooking the township the sniper is far more tense. It is apparent from these shots that the MNU treat the alien predicament as an invasive and dangerous epidemic, and are geared towards a suspicious and paranoid mentality. Furthermore, the shots of the sniper in the helicopter demonstrate the perception that Johannesburg is a warzone. Through this representation of the precautions that the MNU undertake, it is clear that the MNU see Johannesburg as a dangerous and uncontrollable space.

Figure 3: Aerial snipers and armoured vehicles in *District 9*



On the other hand, their intense precautions could also be indicative of the fact that the MNU are distanced from the experience on the ground. The MNU's fear and paranoia of the urban space creates a vicious cycle that results in the aliens' feeling a similar sense of alienation and paranoia. This alienation is evidenced by the fact that aliens appear hostile to the MNU when they first enter *District 9*. The mutual suspicion that exists between the MNU and the aliens presents the city of Johannesburg as a space of distrust and hostility. Mutual distrust and fear of the "other" is a recurrent theme in Johannesburg as the spatial and economic divides that blight the city in real life have given rise to a similar mentality. It is clear that Blomkamp is welcoming us to a city that is familiar, at least to the people who know it.

This sense of familiarity is further reinforced by the fact that Blomkamp uses locally relevant imagery to emphasize the action on screen. The Red Ants, who are a privately owned removal squad utilised to remove squatters from the inner city, make an appearance during the initial relocation scenes. The fact that the Red Ants are privately owned reinforces the idea of social distance as a barrier preventing the breakdown of suspicion and paranoia between various parties in the urban space. Additionally, the use of the privately owned security company assists in locating *District 9* more profoundly within the context of contemporary Johannesburg in order to demonstrate similarities between this film and the realities on the ground.

While in *District 9*, the MNU represent a mentality that is distanced from the experience of the ground, it is apparent that the lead character in Gavin Hood's *Tsotsi* is so immersed in the realities of township life that he knows little else. In fact, Tsotsi is so immersed in township life, that every time he leaves the township space

and ventures into new areas of the city, an incident occurs which leads to a change in his character.

In the beginning of the film, Tsotsi leaves the township with his gang. The shot of Tsotsi in the opening sequence walking with his gang, owning the walking path in total confidence and with a swagger of ominous danger, suggests that Tsotsi's criminal behaviour is deeply entrenched and really difficult to change. In his home space of the township, Tsotsi has great power on account of the fact that he is feared by the people around him. This power is further illustrated by his rivalry with the gangster, Fela, which is alluded to at the beginning of the film. It becomes clear that the township is Tsotsi's comfort zone and safe space. Just as the height of the Carlton Centre is seen as a safe space for the MNU and the centre of their power base, so too is the township a space from where Tsotsi derives his power and strength. The idea of 'home' as a space of security and power is a common idea in real Johannesburg, where many suburban households are fortified and protected, providing residents of Johannesburg with a space of power.

Figure 4: Tsotsi rules in his comfort zone in Soweto



However, it is interesting to note that Tsotsi's shack is elevated above the other residences of the Township, in a similar manner to which the MNU is elevated above Johannesburg dwellers in *District 9*. This reinforces De Certeau's notion of distance in relation to the lived experience on the ground. Tsotsi's power, therefore, has a limited basis in reality on account of the fact that he is disconnected from the realities on the ground. Just as in *District 9*, it is difficult not to be impacted by coming down to ground level. The elevation of Tsotsi's shack, while not placing him in the same vein as the panoptic MNU, serves to demarcate the fact that Tsotsi's ambitions isolates him from the masses. Yet while the MNU do everything in their power to

protect themselves when coming down to ground level, Tsotsi is not as fortunate. While Tsotsi does go in with his “armour” in the form of his weapon, it doesn’t help.

Figure 5: Tsotsi's elevated shack



Tsotsi’s lack of security against the Johannesburg landscape ultimately results in personal change, and his engagement with the urban space begins just after the opening sequence, when he and his gang go to Park Station in the CBD. Park Station is the central transport hub for Johannesburg’s underclass but is also a transient space from which people come and go at will. The Train station lacks permanence on account of the many people who walk through it, and as such, is an insecure space. Park Station is unpredictable and dangerous for Tsotsi, contrasting strongly with the characters relationship with the Township, in which he feels secure and powerful.

The unpredictability and danger of Park Station is characterised in the film by Hood’s use of subdued lighting and tones to infer the danger of this urban space. The shot of the train arriving in the darkening Johannesburg reinforces the idea that pervasive sense of danger overwhelms the urban space. This is further reinforced by the darkness of the Park Station terminal, which has only fleeting glimpse of light coming out from the doors. As such, it is apparent that Hood is positioning Park Station as a dangerous and ominous location within the city of Johannesburg for not only its transient visitors, but also for Tsotsi himself.

The impending sense of doom is reinforced by the large Public Service poster in the terminal, which state “we are all affected by HIV and AIDS”, which serves to make the characters of the film as well as international audiences aware of Johannesburg’s social plight. Further, the sign is forcing residents of Johannesburg to confront HIV/AIDS in order to ensure that it does not hinder the growth of society.

As such, Hood is using the large poster to highlight the danger associated with meaningful engagement with the city. This is a recurring theme in the film and the poster appears numerous times in different locations, which highlights the intent to force a confrontation with urban issues. AIDS is a spectre that overshadows life in Johannesburg and exacerbates the on-going decay of the city (Hodes, 2008, p. 8). The disease is a key issue in the film, as it lies at the heart of Tsotsi's isolation and replaces apartheid as the narrative's invisible villain. As a result, Tsotsi's journey to redemption is defined by his engagement with the modern city of Johannesburg, spectres and all.

Figure 6: The spectre of HIV/AIDS in *Tsotsi*



One of the spectres of Johannesburg is crime, which is in fact Tsotsi's purpose for being at Park Station in the first place. Once in the station, Tsotsi observes numerous people in various states of movement, and eventually settles on his target for his criminal act. The target is an older man, who has just paid for a fancy tie with an envelope stuffed with money. The gang approach the old man on the train, and surround him. Tsotsi advises the man to be quiet and Butcher takes out his knife. There are a large number of people on the train, but none raise a hand to prevent the mugging of the man, which suggests the idea that the majority of people in Johannesburg refuse to intervene in the plight of others. In this depiction, Hood is suggesting that the people of Johannesburg are isolated from one another, and do not take action when their comrade is threatened. When the man resists, Butcher kills him. Tsotsi looks on in horror, while removing the purse from his jacket. The gang hold him up, as the majority of people leave the train. They then leave the man on the coach. The act of crime acts as both an indicator of Johannesburg's social ills but it is also Tsotsi's first step on the path of redemption.



The redemptive quality of this murder is seen in the fact that it appears to have unsettled Tsotsi's sense of power, which was established at the beginning of the film. Upon returning to the township, Tsotsi is so flustered by Boston questioning his sense of decency that he beats him to a bloody pulp. After perpetrating this beating, Tsotsi runs from the township in tears. He runs through a field, and goes into the suburb. While he is running through the field, he has a flashback from a traumatic event in his youth as well as recollecting the concrete pipes where he used to live as a child, which suggests a connection with the space of Johannesburg and begins the process of the character confronting his past.

Figure 7: Tsotsi has a flashback to his youth as he traverses Johannesburg on foot



Tsotsi's journey to redemption as a result of interacting with the township space, contrasts with Sox Morake's downward spiral towards gangsterism in Oliver Schmitz's *Hijack Stories*. Sox's journey to understand the township mentality leads him to go under the wing of Zama, a notorious hijacker, who educates him as to what it takes to be a gangster. Yet this mentorship as well as Sox's experience of new spaces in Johannesburg results in him becoming corrupted, as opposed to redeemed.

The city of Johannesburg is highlighted as a key player at the very outset of the *Hijack Stories*. The opening credits show Sox in a state of motion from the affluent Johannesburg suburb of Rosebank to the township of Soweto. As he moves through the city in the minibus taxi, the diverse nature of the Johannesburg becomes apparent. From the bustle of the highway to the desolate and impoverished surrounds of the township space, this transitional sequence works to showcase the diversity of the city's surrounds, and also highlights the fact that there is little distance between affluence and poverty within the Johannesburg space. It is then remarkable that Sox is staring out the window observing the change with interest,

given the proximity in distance between these two areas. His lack of exposure to areas within his own city is indicative of the isolation of citizens of Johannesburg. Sox is totally alienated from the township space, which also works to highlight the distance that exists between upper and lower class residents of the city. The sense of paranoia and distrust connects *Hijack Stories* to *District 9* and *Tsotsi*, thus situating fear of the other and an inability to engage fully with the city on the basis of this fear as a key theme in post-apartheid Johannesburg film.

Figure 8: Sox travelling through Johannesburg in *Hijack Stories*



However, it is also apparent that Sox's alienation from the township space connotes that a sense of diaspora exists even amongst residents of Johannesburg. Certain residents, like Sox, are so far removed from their original centres that returning marks arrival in a space and landscape that appears alien but really should not be so foreign. The spatial construction of the city, the divide that exists between the rich and poor, has created alternate existences and lifestyles within Johannesburg that are far removed from one another. This theme is also imagined in *District 9*, where Wickus' experience of life in Johannesburg is the polar opposite to the experience of the aliens.

The sense of internal diaspora is apparent in *Hijack Stories* by Sox's return to the township. Being originally from the township, Sox is covertly making a homecoming at the beginning of the film. He is returning to a space that was once familiar, but is now alien. The disconnection and alienation that Sox feels with the township is evidenced by the scene which follows his initial arrival in Soweto. When Sox walks through the quiet, seemingly deserted streets of the township, he is spotted by two men, who observe his expensive clothes and urban swagger, and assume that he

will be easy pickings for a mugging. They decide that Sox “looks like cash”, and begin to follow him with a view to mugging him. Sox is immediately seen as different even though he is a black man, which reinforces the idea that he is disconnected from the township space.

The fact that Sox is under threat as soon as he arrives in the township highlights the perception that the township space is fraught with danger. The township space is highlighted as a space within Johannesburg where crime and violence is overt, as opposed to suburban spaces, where it is more subtle and covertly engineered. There does not appear to be any police presence in the township, thus Schmitz is inferring that the township is the most violent space in the city, on account of the fact that it has been abandoned by authority figures. This is not dissimilar to the relationship between the MNU and the alien township in *District 9*, as there is a clear sense of distance between the two parties, and their only incursions into the township space is when it is required. The sense of authority figures abandoning the township space also manifests in *Tsotsi*, when the police officers realise that Tsotsi has escaped to the township but choose to do nothing about it and wait until he returns to the scene of his initial crime. The unwillingness of authority figures to enter the township reinforces that the township is an area that has been abandoned by authority figures.

The abandonment of the township space by authority figures appears to have necessitated a new environment, where survival in Johannesburg is achieved by adopting the traits and attitudes of township life. This is evidenced by when Sox realises he is under threat, and retreats into the safety of a house where a young woman, called Grace, is lazing about outside. Grace wards the men off by calling them names and insulting them, which suggest that demeaning others is a key survival instinct in Johannesburg. It is also interesting that in the township environment, Sox is rescued by a woman. In many ways, this could indicate an emasculation of the upper class male in the township context. As the film progresses, Sox’s attitude changes, and he becomes more misogynist and insulting to other people as he takes on the township mentality. It is possible to assume that Sox’s attempts to acclimatize to the township space is enabling him to reclaim a form of manhood, which he has lost on account of his engagement with upper class white people. *Hijack Stories* is suggesting that in adopting a township mentality, Sox is developing the skills required in order to be seen as a powerful figure, which has



become necessary owing to the absence of authority figures in the Township environment.

Figure 9: Grace saves Sox in *Hijack Stories*

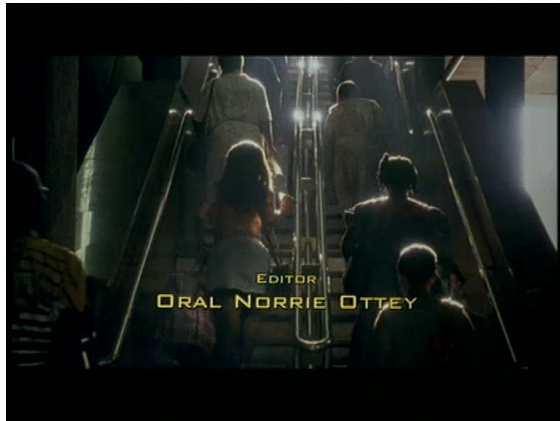


The theme of alienation and the need to adapt to new city spaces that are hostile is not only felt by residents of Johannesburg, but also by newcomers to the city. This is manifested in Les Blair's 1996 film *Jump the Gun* through the characters of Clinton and Gugu, who are arriving in post-apartheid Johannesburg for the first time. The film's credit sequence observes the arrival of a train into the city. The film opens with the sound effect of a train engine, but depicts the outside of the city. This suggests the theme of arrival into a new space, which ties into the *African Jim* theme of migration into the urban centre of Johannesburg. Yet, it is apparent that while sharing the common interest of being new arrivals to the city and being on the same train, Gugu and Clinton are oblivious to each other's presence. On the other hand, one can also infer from their 'joint arrival' that a shared experience is possible between two people from different backgrounds. In addition, De Certeau's notion that movement through an urban space can result in profound personal change is brought to life by the director highlighting their joint arrival via train. For Gugu and Clinton, arriving in Johannesburg is the beginning of a personal change experience.

In the same arrival sequence, Clinton walks through Park Station, looking around trying to accustom himself to new surroundings. There is a shot of light peering out through the windows of the station as he walks through it, which foreshadows the new experiences that he will have in the city. Furthermore, there is a shot of Gugu ascending a stairway into the light of Johannesburg upon her arrival, which indicates Blair's intent to paint Johannesburg as an aspirational and positive space. This separates *Jump the Gun* from *Tsotsi*, in which Park Station is depicted as a dark and

dreary place. It appears that Blair is attempting to paint Johannesburg in a positive light, and highlighting that the city is in face a positive space.

Figure 10: Gugu emerges into the light in *Jump the Gun*



However, Clinton demonstrates that although engaging with Johannesburg is positive, there is still substantial resistance to the potential impact that the city can have on an individual. After Clinton leaves the station, the camera is on Clinton as he sits in a taxi on the way to his hotel. Peering out the window at the change in the city, he comments stoically “South Africa is getting quite African lately”, followed by a shake of his head. This is the first indicator that Clinton is resistant to the changes that have occurred in the urban space following apartheid time. He is suspicious of the new Johannesburg, and feels immediately alienated from the city. It is clear that privileged whites have been displaced to the suburban periphery. It is apparent that on the surface, the Johannesburg environment can appear hostile to those, like Clinton, who see themselves as outsiders. In addition, that hostility drives resistance and an unwillingness to engage.

The next sequence with Clinton follows him as he walks through the city streets at night. He appears to be the only white man in the city centre. As he stops to look at some records, he witnesses a mugging, and appears shocked by the experience. This experience acts to reinforce Clinton’s negative first impression of Johannesburg. The mugging serves to situate crime as an inescapable part of the Johannesburg experience. Clinton is coming to his own conclusions about the nature of crime in the city, and is not engaging meaningfully with people from the other side of socio economic spectrum yet. Clinton’s resistance to engagement is being hardened by the violence and hostility that infiltrates the city of Johannesburg.

Figure 11: Clint witnesses a mugging in *Jump the Gun*



In the analysed films, the first impression of Johannesburg is that of a violent and hostile space which breeds paranoia through division and alienation. An unwillingness to engage with different spaces is a theme on account of the fact that engagement with new spaces breeds change and a breakdown of existing power structures. In order to manage with the uncontrollable nature of the city, authority figures either insulate themselves in heavily fortified vehicles and armour as shown in *District 9*, or completely abandon high risk environments as shown in *Hijack Stories* and *Tsotsi*. It is evident that entering and engaging with new spaces is unsettling for the city's protagonists and, as will be shown in the upcoming chapter, results in fundamental personal change.

### 5.3 Johannesburg as a Change Agent

In the various films, it is apparent that movement throughout the city of Johannesburg leads to transformative experiences for characters. When such movement does not directly lead to a change in behaviour, it can have an unsettling and challenging reaction for the protagonists. I will now explore the ways in which engagement with the city of Johannesburg results in change.

Engagement with new urban space results in fundamental change in *Tsotsi*. After leaving the township following his ruthless beating of Boston, Tsotsi emerges in the suburb. His arrival in the suburb is filled with a sense of dramatic foreboding as he is entering into unknown territory in a heavy rain. The camerawork is from behind the

character, almost following him tentatively as he engages with a new space. As such, Hood is implying that Tsotsi is totally unfamiliar with the urban space. In addition, there are a large number of trees in the shot, which positions the film quite clearly in Johannesburg, renowned as being home to the largest man-made forest in the world. From another angle, it is clear that the trees, in tandem with the rain, create an exacerbated sense of foreboding as they darken the shot. Thus, Hood is positioning the suburbs as a dark and ominous space for Tsotsi, while also providing him cover for his opportunistic attack. Tsotsi then stops, the camera zooms in on his face and then tilts down to his hands, in order to highlight the fact that they are shaking. The shaking of Tsotsi's hands can be linked to fear, which stems from his presence in the suburban environment. It is a far cry from the opening scenes of the film, where he swaggers through the township with confidence. It is clear that the suburb is being depicted as a hostile and unknown space for Tsotsi.

Figure 12: The desolation of the suburbs in *Tsotsi*



Tsotsi's lack of comfort in the suburban space is further reinforced by his anti-social behaviour in hijacking a suburban woman and stealing her vehicle. However, this behaviour is not solely due to Tsotsi's personal issues but also due to wider social issues that manifest in Johannesburg. Certain shots in the hijacking scene are integral in unpacking the reasons for Tsotsi's actions, most notably the shot of Tsotsi crouching on the ground, observing the woman arriving at her home. The shot of the house reveals the intense security structures that exist around the home, which resonates with this idea that Johannesburg residents fortify their space in order to protect themselves from the dangers of the outside world. The gate of the house has spikes to keep intruders out, which once again reinforces the idea that the suburb is an unwelcoming space for Tsotsi. The need for Johannesburg's suburban residents to keep intruders out has resulted in the polarisation and alienation of other residents

of the city, who are immediately positioned as dangerous outsiders. This alienation breeds sociopathic behaviour as evidenced by Tsotsi's desire to cause harm.

However, as Tsotsi begins to engage with the people of the suburbs, an incident occurs that ultimately leads to massive change. Tsotsi pulls a gun on the woman, and when the woman opens the car door in panic, Tsotsi shoots her and gets away with the vehicle. On the way back to the township, he discovers he has stolen the woman's baby. It is critical to note the manner in which Tsotsi has abandoned the suburb and what he is left with. After entering the suburb without being clear on his reasons for being there, other to engage in an anti-social act, he has left the suburban space with a child. This burden will redefine Tsotsi's identity later in the film. By engaging with a different space in the city, Tsotsi has had an experience that will inalterably shift his character and lead to growth.

Further to this, Tsotsi continues to have redefining experiences upon further engagement with new spaces in Johannesburg. On his next visit to the city, Tsotsi has a key confrontation with the blind homeless man. The man spits on his foot after Tsotsi accidentally bumps him. Enraged, Tsotsi menacingly follows the wheelchair stricken, blind beggar out of Park Station. He enters the city, away from the safety of the station. He follows the man into a dark alley, under the highway bridges. Tsotsi is now in the city's underbelly, below the bustle of moving vehicles. The shot of Tsotsi walking under the highway bridge is similar to the shot of him walking in the suburbs. Both environments are without people, deserted. This links itself back to Tsotsi's experience in the suburbs. The suburbs, with their high walls and wire fences, are as silent and otherworldly as the bare concrete space where Tsotsi confronts the old beggar, which demonstrates the alienation inherent in both spaces.

Figure 13: Desolation in the Johannesburg inner city in *Tsotsi*



Furthermore, while the suburbs are marked by Johannesburg's man made forest, this highway bridge connotes Johannesburg large and looming infrastructure, which can be overbearing and overpowering to those unprepared for it. Therefore, Hood could be suggesting that both the suburban and inner city spaces have a powerful ambience that has the ability to generate change, which highlights the impact of space in driving personal change.

Tsotsi proceeds to have a discussion with the beggar, in which he quizzes and questions the man's resolve to exist in such a hopeless state. It is apparent that Tsotsi is changed by his discussion with this man, as his curiosity to discover the meaning of his engagement with the man heightens the sense of empathy he begins to feel. Hence by venturing into new urban spaces and engaging with new and different people, Tsotsi is repeatedly confronted with experiences that spur him towards personal change.

A similar pattern of engagement driving personal change emerges in *District 9*. The major difference between the two films is that while Tsotsi changes on account of moving in and out of Johannesburg, Wickus changes in a far more linear fashion. Wickus' journey from his suburban background to District 9 is a physical journey that involves walking between the two spaces. However, what separates Wickus' journey from Tsotsi's is that there is no return to the suburban space, while Tsotsi's return to the suburban space results in his arrest and imprisonment. In walking between the two spaces, Wickus has an experience that drives him towards his final state of empathy towards the alien race.

At the outset of the film, Wickus is in the MNU building, sheltered from the experience on the ground in Johannesburg, and distanced from the suffering of the aliens. When he leaves the building for the first time, it is to go and oversee the relocation of the alien, and this journey is done in the safety and security of the armoured truck. It is only after he has escaped from the captivity of the MNU that he begins to change. Wickus' change is dependent on the fact that he is an outcast from society. He is no longer welcome in his own house, and is shunned by his friends and family. Blomkamp suggests that the first step on the road to understanding the other in your midst is to be reduced to the level of an outsider, thus being treated in a similar fashion to Tsotsi, who is excluded from suburban life.

As Wickus moves towards the township, Blomkamp employs a series of quick cuts to highlight the extent to which Wickus is forced to experience Johannesburg anew. The first shot is of Wickus picking up a black refuse bag and scrounging for food. In Johannesburg, black refuse bags are synonymous with trash collection, but also with a group of beggars who collect rubbish from motorists at every street corner in exchange for cash. As such, the refuse bag is symbolic in the Johannesburg context through its use as a survival mechanism for the underprivileged elements of society. In addition, the shot of Wickus scrounging for food in the rubbish can be cross-referenced with the earlier scene in the film where the alien is seen scrounging for food in a dumpster. As such, this shot is indicative of Wickus' transformation from suburban elite to subaltern alien, as he is seen to be demonstrating alien behaviour, which is seen by the majority of society members as abhorrent and shameful. Thus, Blomkamp attempts to illustrate through Wickus the realisation of the Johannesburg residents' fear of living like the other by expressing what this lifestyle truly entails.

Figure 14: Wickus scrounging for food in *District 9*





The second noteworthy shot is Wickus stealing a mobile phone from a fellow pedestrian. This movement signifies Wickus' transition to a member of the underclass of Johannesburg society as he is forced to act in a desperate and criminal manner. Wickus' descent towards anti-social behaviour, in this instance theft, is indicative of the alienation of the underprivileged in the city. Similarly, *Tsotsi* also exhibits anti-social behaviour when committing crime, and thus, there is a clear indication in both *District 9* and *Tsotsi* that engaging with different spaces of the city has an impact on the behaviour of its citizens, even if that change is negative.

Figure 15: Wickus stealing a cellphone from a pedestrian in *District 9*



Furthermore, this act of theft resonates with the everyday experiences of South Africans, and is considered to be a part of the pedestrian experience. In stealing the phone, Wickus is connecting with a subaltern identity, albeit out of desperation and against his will. Yet, even if this act of crime is against Wickus' better nature, the fact that he has to steal the phone suggests that he is becoming more attuned with the actual dynamics of the city.

Yet, while personal change in the Johannesburg environment can be spurred by physical movement in the city space, it is also evident that personal change can manifest through dialectic, a tug-of-war between spaces that leaves the protagonist in a state of flux. This is apparent in *Hijack Stories*, where in order for Sox to reclaim his township identity, he needs to shed his upper class mentality. As such, a tug of war occurs between the upper class lifestyle of Rosebank and the township of Soweto, which causes an existential conflict in for Sox.

Sox's existential crisis is heralded by the fact that the two different worlds begin to merge together, colluding to throw his life into disarray. The first indication that the township and the suburb are coming together occurs when Sox is awoken by a



phone call from Grace, the girl from the township, who is calling him at home to chat. He denies that it is him and hangs up the call. This indicates that the township life is beginning to merge with and invade his suburban life, which he is not comfortable with. Initially, Sox wishes to keep the Township experience separate from his urban life, yet as the film progresses it becomes abundantly clear that balancing this two worlds is a difficult challenge.

This identity crisis is reinforced by the next scene that takes place in a Rosebank nightclub, Sox is dancing with his white girlfriend and comments that “the Rosebank mall is not quite down-town Johannesburg”. This comment suggests that Sox is becoming acutely aware of the divide between Rosebank and Soweto. Sox’s perception of his life in Johannesburg is changing rapidly through an engagement with the way that people live in the township. As such, the tug-of-war between Rosebank and Soweto has led to a shift in Sox’s opinions, which has forced him to question the very nature of his engagement with Johannesburg and caused him to challenge his own role in this space.

Sox begins to move more profoundly towards adopting the behavioural attributes of the township at the expense of shedding his upper class roots. This is further explored later in the sequence, when Sox is seen walking in the township as he goes to Zama’s mothers house in order to get the gangsters phone number. As he walks, he shapes to kick a dog. As such, it is implied that in order to for Sox to reclaim his township roots, he needs to embrace the innate hostility of the township that was established earlier in the film. In many ways, coming from the township implies that an individual has a unique approach to life. Nuttall suggests that township fashion is being worn with “pleasure and pride” (Nuttall, 2004, p. 100), which indicates how the perception of the township has been reimagined over time. Sox is clearly beginning to manifest the township mode in his own personality and he is developing a sense of pride through this.

Figure 16: Sox with newfound township swagger in *Hijack Stories*



However, it is also possible that Sox, by actively reclaiming his township identity is overcompensating and as such, acting in a way that is not authentic. Therefore, through his transformation, Sox is becoming a caricature of township life as opposed to an actual representation of it. This caricature is further exposed by the polite, suburban tone that Sox takes with Zama's mother, as Sox makes an almost immediate shift from the township swagger to polite upper class mentality. As such, Sox cannot truly escape his suburban upbringing, and has to negotiate with this identity crisis on an on-going basis.

Yet, it is apparent that for his own sake, Sox believes that he needs to be "more township" than suburban. This mentality is confirmed in the scene where he is arguing with his white girlfriend, and tells her that he "has found himself" in the township space. By spending time in the township, walking through it, observing and engaging with his township associates, Sox believes that he has found the confidence to survive in Johannesburg as a master of his domain, as opposed to being a timid suburbanite. However, the authenticity of this change is challenged by Zama's arrival in Rosebank; he taunts Sox's girlfriend and challenges Sox for spending exorbitant amount on a fancy beer. In doing so, Zama reveals Sox as a phony, and highlights the fact that there is more to becoming township than simply looking and dressing the part. Zama is intimating that people who come from the township have a stronger sense of monetary value, proven by his statement that "you can get drunk for 10 bucks in Soweto". Zama is attempting to impart to Sox a sense of township morals and values, something that is mostly taken for granted in the suburban understanding of the township mentality. As such, Zama is attempting to demonstrate to Sox that he will never be truly township, and as such, is emphasizing the extent of Sox's identity crisis.

On the other hand, it is also possible for Johannesburg residents to move beyond identity crisis by engaging meaningfully with each other. *Jump the Gun* posits the idea that it is possible to find a sense of true common purpose and interest through developing an appreciation for spaces within the city. This is especially noticeable in the scene where Clinton and Minnie climb up a hill overlooking the city. When he arrives at the top, Clinton admits that the city is “beautiful”. This acknowledgement of urban beauty contrasts Clinton’s initial response to the city, which is pejorative. It is unclear as to whether Clinton could have come to this realisation without Minnie’s guidance, as she is the one who leads him to the view. From this, one can infer that Minnie is in fact the catalyst for Clinton’s change in outlook. It is arguable that Clinton’s change stems from both the relationship with another Johannesburg resident, but also on account of a positive engagement with urban space.

Figure 17: Engaging with the natural space of Johannesburg in *Jump the Gun*



The idea that a beautiful part of the city can drive a change in outlook is further reinforced in the film as a number of interactions take place on this same hill. Both engagements occur with mixed groups of people. The first is with Gugu and Jabu, who are having a conversation, while being observed by Clinton and Minnie who are sitting nearby. This sequence is demonstrating the fact that different races are moving closer to each other. The final integration is seen in the final scene in the film, where Gugu and Minnie are seen hugging and holding each other. This coming together of different spaces in a natural space heightens the realisation that it is possible to discover a sense of common purpose in the Johannesburg environment, regardless of the difficulties that exist within the environment. Interaction with beautiful spaces in the city provides a key means by which people within Johannesburg can come together, and build positive relationships. Of particular

noteworthiness is the manner in which a positive interaction with the urban space can drive reconciliation between different racial groups. In addition, there is a climactic scene where Gugu, Minnie and Clinton are sharing a bed together, in which Clinton has, in his words, his first ever meaningful interaction with a black South African. By engaging with the city of Johannesburg through its people and its places, Clinton's opinions have been aligned with that of the rainbow nation and he is now able to engage with black South Africans on an equal footing.

As such, it is apparent that engagement with spaces within Johannesburg has clear ramifications for those who engage. *Tsotsi* demonstrates the fact that by moving in and out of the city, an individual can have an experience that unsettles and shifts preconceived ideas of identity. *District 9* suggests that the physical journey on foot between two different lifestyles in Johannesburg can lead to changing behaviour that enables one to connect more meaningfully with the other. *Hijack Stories* highlights the possibility of an identity crisis emerging for those residents of Johannesburg who are caught between two different worlds, while *Jump the Gun* suggests that engagement with beautiful and natural elements of the city can lead to positive interactions between people and races. What is common to all of these films is the idea that engagement with the urban space results in real personal change.

#### **5.4 The New Joburger**

Throughout the four films, the journeys undertaken by the various characters have resulted in a fundamental change in character and personality. In *Tsotsi*, this change manifests in a new perspective that enables the main protagonist to engage with the city in a profoundly different way than before. Hood demonstrates *Tsotsi*'s personal change in a lengthy final sequence where *Tsotsi* is taking a scenic walk through the city of Johannesburg on his way to returning the baby to its parents. This sequence of *Tsotsi*'s final walk through the city showcases the city in an entirely different manner to which it has been depicted in the film.

*Tsotsi*'s personal change is brought to life by the fact that the visual detail of the city becomes clear throughout this final sequence. In addition, change is represented by the change in soundtrack, which shifts from township hip hop to soft African Pop (Rijdsdijk & Haupt, 2007). *Tsotsi* is now able to see the city more clearly and

positively, which suggests that his relationship with the urban space has shifted dramatically throughout the film. Johannesburg is now a place of clarity and peace as opposed to darkness and conflict. It is now far more navigable and easier to understand for Tsotsi, who is no longer unsettled by new spaces, but rather empowered by them. His engagement with the city has shifted fundamentally, even if he will have little access after his imprisonment for trespassing into the suburban space.

The idea that the city has become a clearer space for Tsotsi is reinforced by Hood's use of lighting in the final sequence. The city has emerged as a lighter and more welcoming environment, thus highlighting a clear parallel between Hood's initial depiction of the city and the images in the final sequence. Park station is depicted with completely different lighting in this latter segment. In the first instance of Tsotsi's arrival to the city, Park Station is depicted as a dark, ominous space. Conversely, at the end of the film, Park Station is a well-lit locale. This change of lighting in Johannesburg is indicative of the fact that the city itself has become a far more manageable space for *Tsotsi* throughout the film. If one approaches Johannesburg with maturity and positive intent, the city becomes a clearer and more manageable space.

Figure 18: Light shining on the Park Station stairwell in *Tsotsi*



Another key aspect of Tsotsi's transformation is evidenced by the fact that the final sequence takes part during sunset. It is a commonly accepted that Johannesburg is at its most dangerous in the night, and this nocturnal danger has been highlighted throughout the film. Tsotsi's personal change has resulted in him no longer being pigeonholed as an anti-social outcast who thrives in the night time, but is walking through the city during the daytime and seeing a different picture altogether. With

Tsotsi experiencing the city during the day, he is becoming part of a functional daytime society rather than manifesting its dysfunctions as a nocturnal danger. Hood's positioning of the city during the daytime as a means of highlighting Tsotsi's change highlights the impact of Johannesburg in driving individual change.

In addition, it is apparent that the clarity of daytime enables the city to reveal itself and open itself up more fully to Tsotsi. This is evidenced in the same sequence when Tsotsi eventually arrives on a hill with the child, and takes in a panoramic view of the Johannesburg skyline. This is also the hill used in *Jump the Gun*, and highlights the power of natural space within the city in driving a positive engagement. From this vantage point, Tsotsi is able to see iconic Johannesburg imagery, such as the Ponte Building and the Hillbrow tower, for the first time. Now that Tsotsi has changed, he is now able to engage fully with the city and is open to whatever it can offer him. He can now access feelings of belonging in a city, which is now no longer hostile but open to him. Notable, in the same shot of the buildings, there is a Christian prayer group present. The presence of this prayer group highlights the spirituality inherent in Tsotsi's newfound connection with the City of Johannesburg, and reinforces the idea that the city is now open to him on account of his being open to interacting with it more openly. Thus, Tsotsi's journey throughout the film has brought him to a state of clarity and openness, which enables him to engage more fully with the city of Johannesburg.

Figure 19: Tsotsi takes in a beautiful view of Johannesburg



While Tsotsi's change is more a natural progression, it is apparent that Wickus' final evolution in *District 9* is an invasive transformation that he cannot control nor desires. The sense of invasiveness stems from a transformation that is both physical, and

locational. This is evidenced by the scene in which Wickus awakens in District 9, after illegally occupying an empty shack. He appears disoriented, not knowing exactly where he is. This sense of disorientation heightens the sense of invasive transformation as Wickus is finding the adjustment to living in the township jarring, as he is away from the security of the suburban space and what he knows. The challenge Wickus has in adjusting to this new lifestyle is also indicative of a broader issue: the difficulty of the suburban elite in putting themselves in the position of the urban poor. Wickus' geographic relocation is forced by necessity, and reinforces Blomkamp's vision of an invasive adjustment to a new dispensation.

In addition, the sense of an uncontrollable and undesirable evolution is highlighted by Wickus' physical transformation. Wickus' transformation begins with parts of his body beginning to change, including his hand, as well as his DNA. But in addition to this, Wickus begins to take on the primal habits of the aliens whom he has previously considered to be inferior and disgusting. This is evidenced from the moment when Wickus purchases cat food from the township vendor, and guzzles it up. Wickus' new circumstances on account of his alienation from society have forced him to partake in this alien feeding habit. It is notable that his eating of the cat food comes across like frenzy. His experience of eating the cat food is akin to a feeding frenzy, which suggests that under difficult circumstances, people from suburban backgrounds can act in a way that previously seemed abhorrent. The sense of desperation of enjoying something that tastes so good, that otherwise would be unpalatable under normal circumstances, heightens the sense that Wickus is in the throes of an aggressive and invasive transformation that he cannot control.

Figure 20: Wickus feasting on cat food in *District 9*





There is only truly one instance in *District 9* when Wickus' transformation appears not to be against his will. This occurs in the climax of the film when he decides to rescue Christopher Johnson from certain death at the hands of Kobus and assist him in reaching the spaceship. While Wickus' decision to help Christopher is self-serving in that he is trying to get Christopher to the spaceship in order to be cured himself, it can also be read as self-sacrificial because running back into the battle-zone could be suicidal. As such, his decision is poignant and highlights that idea that while Wickus' physical and geographic transformation is beyond his control, he is in full control of his emotional transformation. Through his mutation, Wickus is able to understand and empathise with the plight of the Alien, which triggers an emotional change. Yet, it could also be seen that Wickus' empathy for the alien is driven by his own honest desire to live a normal life, and this connection with his personal roots drives him to connect with Christopher in a meaningful way. Therefore, Blomkamp is suggesting that physical, geographic and socio-economic transformations that occur against one's will are key elements in enabling the residents of Johannesburg to feel a sense of empathy and connectedness with one another.

While Wickus' transformation is beyond his control, it is clear that Sox is either unable or unwilling to transform at all. In *Hijack Stories*, Sox's failure to transform is explored when Zama and the gang take Sox with them on a drive along with a view to stealing and hijack vehicles. Sox is required to abandon his upbringing in Rosebank and exist on the opposite side of the divide. As the gang drives menacingly through Johannesburg's upper class suburbs, a tracking shot highlights the high walls of the suburban homes, armed response signs as well as the boomed areas and guard houses. The inclusion of this imagery highlights the fact that upper class Johannesburg is all about being protected from the city's criminal elements. By being in the car with Zama and the gang, Sox now exists within the criminal experience, and is forced to stand against the society from whence he emerged.

While Sox appears to be rebelling against his suburban identity, there is still a level of anxiety that plagues his movements. He cannot truly go all the way over to the other side of the economic divide. This becomes apparent when Zama forces Sox to attempt to steal a car in order to prove himself as a member of the gang. Initially, Sox is not comfortable performing a criminal act, but feels threatened by the gang and resolves to steal a vehicle. His attempt is botched when the vehicle alarm goes



off, and the owner of the vehicle comes to the car. Sox then proceed to ask the owner for his car keys, in an overtly polite manner, which leads to Zama's intervention and the car being stolen. There is a humorous element to this scene, as Sox is really clumsy and out of place performing this criminal act. There are a number of scenes in *Hijack Stories*, which highlight Sox as a 'fish out of water' in the township environment. Schmitz has in many ways created a farce about crime in Johannesburg and this is evidenced in Sox's attempts to reclaim a township identity. These attempts fail on account of his inability to rebel against his suburban upbringing. For Sox, it is futile to attempt to change.

Figure 21: Sox botching a hijacking in *Hijack Stories*



This futility is profoundly evident at the end of the film when Sox is badly injured following a failed hijacking, which culminates in Zama stealing his identity and emancipating himself from the township. Sox's failure to establish an identity that merges the township and the suburban life results in his total alienation from Johannesburg. Sox's fate suggests that survival in Johannesburg is not an easy task to achieve and requires the individual to immerse themselves completely in new and foreign lifestyles. As such, *Hijack Stories* highlights the danger in resisting complete assimilation, as failing to adapt can possibly lead to further identity crises as well as physical harm.

Figure 22: Zama's final victory in *Hijack Stories*



Conversely, *Jump the Gun* suggests that positive engagement with the city of Johannesburg can transform people to a higher plane of personal consciousness, whether it involves an innate confidence and comfort within the city itself, or rather an ease of engagement with people from different racial backgrounds. It is clear that the nature of the city plays a key role in shifting Clinton's perception. As explored previously, a number of positive interpersonal and interracial interactions take place in the outdoors throughout the course of the film. Yet, it is also clear that Clinton feels a level of comfort and safety in the outdoors. This comfort is apparent in the scene immediately following his purchase of the gun where Clinton is seen practising on the outskirts of the city. The image of him cocking the gun with the city in the backdrop, while possibly destructive, suggests that he is and is willing to do what he can in order to feel at ease in the city. The gun enables Clinton to feel more secure in himself, and approach life in Johannesburg with confidence, as opposed to fear. The composition of the shot of Clinton practicing aligns him with the tall building of the Johannesburg skyline, positioning him at an equal footing with these structural behemoths. Clinton then turns around, and shoots a bullet at the iconic Hillbrow tower. This act suggests that Clinton now feels confident enough to challenge and master Johannesburg.

Figure 23: Clint aiming to take on the city in *Jump the Gun*



Further, Clinton's positive engagements within Johannesburg empower him to grow as a person and become more accepting of South Africa's new racial dispensation. His confession to Gugu while they are sharing a bed that this is the first conversation he has had with a black person marks a key moment in Clinton's self-development. He is now willing and able to engage with the other. He has overcome his preconceptions about life in Johannesburg and is now equipped with the ability to see past racial and social divides. The fact that Clinton departs from Johannesburg shortly after having these realisations does not undermine the impact of his engagement with the city. Clinton is better for his engagement with Johannesburg, and can now engage fully with the New South Africa, no matter his placing on the map.

It is clear that the four analysed films suggest fundamentally different end results for the characters. While *Tsotsi* and *Jump the Gun* suggest that engagement with Johannesburg elicits a positive change in individuals, *District 9* and *Hijack Stories* imply that transformation can be a treacherous beast, with the potential to lead to severe physical and emotional torment. Furthermore, it is apparent that the final state of change for the characters creates a different urban experience. It can lead to a clear and bright vision of a city that can be what you make of it, but it can also lead you to experience and empathise with the harsh realities of urban life.

## 6. Conclusion

Throughout this paper, I have argued that the consequence of a meaningful engagement with the city of Johannesburg is profound personal change. This journey towards change is manifested in post-apartheid films set in Johannesburg.

The theory has shown that it is possible to absorb a nuanced understanding of urban spaces and spatial practices through a city's representation in film. In the case of Johannesburg, it is apparent that the manner the city is depicted in film and other modes of cultural production is consistent with the realities on the ground. I have also argued that due to the diverse nature of South Africans, a singular Johannesburg identity is difficult to pinpoint, and appears to be fractured.

By assessing Johannesburg's depiction in film in tandem with De Certeau's theory of pedestrian enunciations of the urban space, it is possible to attribute the cause of this personal change to an individual's engagement with urban spaces. De Certeau asserts that it is the walker, or protagonist, who crafts his own personal story within the urban space. I have shown throughout this paper the journeys of Wickus, Tsotsi, Sox and Clinton mirror De Certeau's assessment.

The change depends on three fundamental steps. The first step requires the protagonist to look beyond a monolithic impression of Johannesburg and the spaces that exist within it. These preconceptions of the city are common to all subjects, regardless of where their economic, racial or social standings. In addition, the preconceptions of the protagonist are bred directly from the flagrant distrust that has emerged in Johannesburg through its divided and difficult history.

The second step to change requires the protagonist to engage with spaces within Johannesburg with which they are unfamiliar. For a protagonist from an informal settlement, like Tsotsi, change emerges through interacting with the suburban space. For someone from the suburban elite, like Wickus in *District 9* and Sox in *Hijack Stories*, exposure to the township space is critical in shifting mind-sets and changing behaviour. In addition, it is also possible to change through interacting with other residents of Johannesburg as evidenced by Clinton in *Jump the Gun*.

The final step requires the protagonists to embrace the change that has occurred throughout their experience of engaging with the urban space. It is clear that the consequences of engagement with Johannesburg can result in different outcomes. From a positive angle, as seen in *Tsotsi*, engaging with Johannesburg can manifest in a clearer outlook on the city, where opportunities for more engagement and opportunity become available. Engaging with Johannesburg can also drive reconciliation between races and equip the individual to become more effective at navigating the New South African landscape as evidenced by *Jump the Gun*.

However, it is also clear that engaging with Johannesburg can have negative consequences. It can manifest in a physical and emotional transformation that removes agency from the subject, and forces them to live in a manner that they are unprepared for like Wickus in *District 9*. Alternatively, a failure to change effectively can result in physical harm and a loss of identity just as in *Hijack Stories*.

There is no single way of changing in Johannesburg. The consequences of engagement are manifold, but they are also unpredictable. There is no way an individual can prepare themselves for the effect of living in this contested, divided and fascinating city. However, as shown throughout this essay, there are opportunities for a change that creates a more meaningful engagement with Johannesburg, and the people within it. This change is dependent on the willingness of individuals to engage with spaces and people that they are unfamiliar with, and demands an abandonment of the long-held preconceptions about the city.

## 7. Bibliography

- Armes, R. (2007). Dakar. In G. Griffiths, & M. Chudoba, *City + Cinema* (pp. 137-142). Tampere: Datutop.
- Attenborough, R. (Director). (1987). *Cry Freedom* [Motion Picture]. United Kingdom: Universal Pictures UK.
- Baines, G. (2001). Representing the Apartheid City: South African Cinema in the 1950s and Jamie Uys's the Urgent Queue. In M. S. Fitzmaurice, *Cinema And The City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context* (pp. 185-194). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Baumann, Z. (1996). 'From Pilgrim to Tourist or a short history of Identity'. In S. Hall, & P. du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage.
- Beittel, M. (1990). Mapantsula: Cinema, Crime and Politics on the Witwatersrand. *Journal of South African Studies*, 16(4), 751-762.
- Beukes, L. (2010). *Zoo City*. Johannesburg: Jacana.
- Blair, L. (Director). (1996). *Jump The Gun* [Motion Picture]. Johannesburg: African DVD.
- Blignaut, J. (1992). We are Who..? What! - The South African Identity in Cinema. In J. Blignaut, & M. Botha, *Movies, Moguls and Mavericks: South African Cinema, 1979-1991* (pp. 99-110). Cape Town: Showdata.
- Blignaut, J., & Botha, M. (1992). *Movies, Moguls and Mavericks: South African Cinema, 1979-1991*. Cape Town: Showdata.
- Blomkamp, N. (Director). (2009). *District 9* [Motion Picture]. Johannesburg: Channel 4 Films.
- Botha, M. (2007). Post Apartheid Cinema: Policy, Structures, Themes and New Aesthetics. In M. Botha, *Marginal Lives & Painful Pasts: South African Cinema after Apartheid* (pp. 19-47). Cape Town: Genugtig!
- Bremner, L. (2004). *Johannesburg: One City, Colliding Worlds*. Johannesburg: STE.
- Bruno, G. (1997). City Views: The Voyage of Film Images. In D. B. Clarke, *The Cinematic City* (pp. 46-59). London: Routledge.
- De Certeau, M. (1988). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Diawara, M. (2009). Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance. In L. Braudy, & M. Cohen, *Film Theory and Criticism* (pp. 767 - 790). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Diawara, M. (2010). *African Film*. Munich: Prestel.
- Ellapen, J. (2007). The Cinematic Township. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 19(1), 113-138.

- Freimond, C. (Director). (2003). *Gums & Noses* [Motion Picture]. Johannesburg: M-Net Television.
- Fu, A., & Murray, M. (2007). Cinema and the Edgy City: Johannesburg, Carjacking and the Post-Metropolis. *African Identities*, 5, 279-289.
- Gold, J. R. (1997). Of Plans and Planners. In D. B. Clarke, *The Cinematic City* (pp. 59-79). London & New York: Routledge.
- Graham, J. (2007). Exploding Johannesburg: Driving in the Worldly City. *Transtexts & Transcultures*, pg 68 - 83.
- Hodes, R. (2008). *Diseased Dystopias?: HIV/AIDS and the South African City in Yesterday and Tsotsi*. Retrieved February 8, 2011, from Postamble.org: <http://www.postamble.org/PDFs/200955193632963.pdf>
- Hood, G. (Director). (2005). *Tsotsi* [Motion Picture]. South Africa: Ster Kinekor Home Entertainment.
- Kruger, L. (2005). Genres of Johannesburg. *Scrutiny*2, 78-85.
- Kruger, L. (2009). 'Africa Thina'? Xenophobic and Cosmopolitan Agency in Johannesburg's Film and Television Drama. *Journal of South African Studies*, 35(1), 237 - 252.
- Kruger, L. (2010). Critique by Stealth: Aspiration, Consumption and Class in South Africa Television Drama. *Critical Arts: A South-North Journal of Cultural & Media Studies*, 24(1), 75-98.
- Mbembe, A., & Nuttall, S. (2008). Introduction: Afropolis. In A. Mbembe, & S. Nuttall, *Johannesburg: The Elusive metropolis* (pp. 2-33). Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Miller, A. (2010). *Slow Motion*. Johannesburg: Jacana.
- Morris, B. (2004). What We Talk About When We Talk About 'Walking in The City'. *Cultural Studies*, 18(5), 675-697.
- Murray, M. J. (2003). Alien Strangers in Our Midst: The Dreaded Foreign Invasion and "Fortress South Africa". *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 37(2), 440 - 466.
- Murray, M. J. (2008). *Taming The Disorderly City: the Spatial Landscape of Johannesburg after Apartheid*. Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Nowell-Smith, G. (2008). Cities : real and imagined. In M. Shiel, & T. Fitzmaurice, *Cinema And The City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Nuttall, S. (2004). City Forms and Writing the 'Now' in South Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30(4), 731-748.
- Nuttall, S. (2004). Styling the Self: The Y Generation in Rosebank, Johannesburg. *Public Culture*, 16(3), 430-452.

- Penfold, G. (2011, October 27). *'The Whole Place is Science Fiction'*. Retrieved 12 30, 2011, from Stellenbosch Literary Project: <http://slipnet.co.za/view/reviews/%E2%80%98the-whole-place-is-science-fiction%E2%80%99/>
- Rijsdijk, I. M., & Haupt, A. (2007). Redemption to a Kwaito Beat: Gavin Hood's Tsotsi. *Journal of the Musical Arts in Africa*, 4, 29-46.
- Rijsdijk, I.-M. (2007). The White Man's Curse. In M. Botha, *Marginal lives & painful pasts: South African Cinema after Apartheid*. Genugtig!
- Rivers, P. L. (2007). Governing Images: The Politics of Film and Video Distribution in Late Apartheid and Post Apartheid South Africa. *Journal of Film and Video*, 59, 19-31.
- Roodt, D. (Director). (1995). *Cry the Beloved Country* [Motion Picture]. Johannesburg: Impact Video.
- Schmitz, O. (Director). (1988). *Mapantsula* [Motion Picture]. South Africa: African DVD.
- Schmitz, O. (Director). (2000). *Hijack Stories* [Motion Picture]. Johannesburg: Momentum Pictures.
- Stam, R., & Spence, L. (2009). Colonialism, Racism And Representation: An Introduction. In M. Cohen, & L. Braudy, *Film Theory and Criticism* (pp. 751 - 765). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Swanson, D. (Director). (1949). *African Jim* [Motion Picture]. Johannesburg: Nu Metro Home Entertainment.
- Tomaselli, K. (1989). *The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South African Film*. London: Routledge.
- Tomaselli, K. (1992). The Cinema of Jamie Uys. In J. Blignaut, & M. Botha, *Movies, Moguls and Mavericks* (pp. 191 - 231). Cape Town: Showdata.
- Tomaselli, K. (2006). Rereading the Gods Must Be Crazy films. *Visual Anthropology*, 19, 171-200.
- Uys, J. (Director). (1980). *The God's Must Be Crazy* [Motion Picture]. South Africa: Ster Kinekor Home Entertainment.
- Ziman, R. (Director). (2008). *Jerusalema* [Motion Picture]. Johannesburg: Ster-Kinekor Pictures.